ESSAYS

SPECULATIVE & SUGGESTIVE

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

Gift of Ernest & Ella Griffin
Gloria Gaines Memorial Library
Marymount College • Tarrytown, New York

824.8
S988

96578

Frances Stillman
from D.W.S.
Christmas 1894

ESSAYS

SPECULATIVE AND SUGGESTIVE

GLORIA GAINES MEMORIAL LIBRARY
MARYMOUNT COLLEGE
TARRYTOWN, NEW YORK 10592

ESSAYS

SPECULATIVE AND SUGGESTIVE

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

εὑρετικὸν εἶναί φασι τὴν ἐρημίαν.

NEW EDITION.

IN ONE VOL.

NEW YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS,
743 & 745, BROADWAY.
1894.

TO

Miss Margot Tennant,

IN MEMORY

OF LONG DARK WINTER NIGHTS

AT DAVOS,

MADE LUMINOUS

BY WITTY CONVERSATION.

PREFACE.

THE epithets, speculative and suggestive, have not been given to these Essays without due consideration. Written in the isolation of this Alpine retreat, they express the opinions and surmisings of one who long has watched in solitude, "as from a ruined tower," the world of thought, and circumstance, and action. To such an one it may, perhaps, be pardoned if he prove a trifle whimsical in speculation and fantastic in suggestion. I am aware that the first, second, and sixteenth Essays will be judged, by many who may read them, to exceed the bounds of that critical common-sense which is recommended in the third. Possibly my prolonged seclusion from populous cities and the society of intellectual equals—a seclusion which has lasted now, with short and occasional interruptions, through twelve years—the renunciation of ambitious aims and active interests implied in such a life, and the peculiar influences to which those are subjected who spend a seven months' winter, year after year, among white snow-drifts and inhospitable, storm-swept mountains, have bred in me a mystical habit of regarding man's relation to the universe. In these conditions, and forced by broken health to meditate upon the problem of approaching death, a student comes insensibly to think more of nature and the world, less of humanity and self, than when he is swimming down the stream of competitive existence. The particular

loses importance in his range of vision. The universal, little understood, but powerfully felt, assumes ascendancy over his imagination. He is like one who surveys the world of things from a solitary mountain peak or from the centre of a boundless desert. Faiths spring up in him which have closer analogy with the first intuitions of primitive races than with the logical and analytical systems of reasoned thought. Such as they are, these penetrate his mind, and give peculiar tone to all his utterances. The point of view from which many of the more critical Essays in this collection have been written would not be apparent without a frank expression of the speculative thoughts that underlie them. I have, therefore, not shrunk from committing myself to theories and surmises which are advanced in no dogmatic spirit. To suggest ideas, to stimulate reflection, is the object of a book like this. At the same time, were I asked in what order these Essays ought to be studied, I should recommend most people to leave "The Philosophy of Evolution" unread, until one or another of the following articles aroused in them some curiosity about the author's views upon religion and man's relation to the universe.

DAVOS PLATZ,
Feb. 24th, 1890.

N.B.—Seven of the following Essays have appeared, in whole or part, in *The Fortnightly Review*, one in *Time*, and one in *The Century Guild Hobby-Horse*. One has been extracted from a paper previously published in my own "Italian Byways." All these have been re-written to a large extent. The remaining ten, together with the Appendices, are new, and come before the public for the first time now.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

THE PHILOSOPHY OF EVOLUTION 1

ON THE APPLICATION OF EVOLUTIONARY PRINCIPLES TO ART AND LITERATURE 29

ON SOME PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM 58

THE PROVINCES OF THE SEVERAL ARTS 86

ON THE RELATION OF ART TO SCIENCE AND MORALITY 103

REALISM AND IDEALISM 117

THE MODEL 139

BEAUTY, COMPOSITION, EXPRESSION, CHARACTERISATION 149

CARICATURE, THE FANTASTIC, THE GROTESQUE ... 169

NOTES ON STYLE:

- PART I.—HISTORY AND USAGE OF THE WORD... 181
- PART II.—NATIONAL STYLE 190
- PART III.—PERSONAL STYLE 235
- PART IV.—THE ART OF STYLE 242

DEMOCRATIC ART. WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WALT WHITMAN... 255

LANDSCAPE 289

NATURE MYTHS AND ALLEGORIES 321

IS POETRY AT BOTTOM A CRITICISM OF LIFE? A REVIEW OF MATTHEW ARNOLD'S SELECTION FROM WORDSWORTH ... 337

PAGE

IS MUSIC THE TYPE OR MEASURE OF ALL ART? ... 358

THE PATHOS OF THE ROSE IN POETRY 368

A COMPARISON OF ELIZABETHAN WITH VICTORIAN POETRY 388

APPENDIX:

DARWIN'S THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD 425

THE LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE 428

NOTES ON THEISM 432

THE CRITERION OF ART 436

NOTE ON "REALISM AND IDEALISM" 438

NOTE ON "THE MODEL" 441

PRIORITY OF THOUGHT TO LANGUAGE 442

COLOUR-SENSE AND LANGUAGE 443

ESSAYS

SPECULATIVE AND SUGGESTIVE

ESSAYS

SPECULATIVE AND SUGGESTIVE.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF EVOLUTION.

To discuss God apart from Nature is both difficult and perilous; it is as if we separated the soul from the body. We know the soul only through the body, and God only through Nature. Hence the absurdity, as it appears to me, of accusing those of absurdity who philosophically have united God with the world. For everything which exists necessarily pertains to the essence of God; therefore God is the one Being whose existence includes all things.—GOETHE (*circa* 1770), *translated by G. R. Lewes.*

I.

IF we attempt to seize the main fact in the intellectual development of the last half-century, we shall find that this may be described as the triumph of the scientific method in relation to all man's thought about the universe. We have gained our present standing-point by a long process of experimental and philosophical labour, which has been carried on through three centuries in Europe, and which culminated recently in the hypothesis of Evolution.

This hypothesis cannot be separated from those sciences which demonstrate the cosmic unity, analyse the elements of matter, investigate the origins of life upon our earth, and explore the obscure stages of primitive human history. It

cannot be dissociated from those metaphysical speculations regarding man's relation to the world which received poetic utterance from Bruno and Goethe, and found logical expression in the systems of *a priori* thinkers like Hegel.

Evolution, in the widest sense of the term, has to be viewed as a generalisation which combines the data of previous scientific and philosophical thought in a new conception of the universe. Like all such generalisations, it is hypothetical, provisional. Though it has received valuable inductive and experimental support in the region of biology, it does not rest upon the same foundation as Newton's law or as the law of the Conservation of Energy. It must rather be regarded as a comprehensive scheme of thought, inviting demonstration, stimulating discovery, and capable of manifold application.

Least of all does Evolution, as its name and as its principles imply, claim for itself finality. Its adaptation, however, to the present conditions of the human mind is proved by the rapidity with which it is transforming every department of speculation.

In the following pages it will be my object to show reason why the Philosophy of Evolution, instead of crushing the aspirations of humanity and reducing our conceptions of the world to chaos, may be expected to reanimate religion and to restore spirituality to the universe.

II.

This idea is undoubtedly the most potent which has entered the sphere of human thought since Copernicus published his heliocentric theory of the Solar System. When we inquire into the nature of religions, we shall find that they are all of them at root attempts to account for the universe, and to define man's place in the sphere of things. This being the case, it follows that every new cosmological idea, every fresh hypothesis regarding the beginning of the world and man, every alteration in the theory of Nature, will induce

changes in the current systems of theology, metaphysics, morals. Now the mythological elements of Christianity took shape in the intellects of people who conceived our earth to be the centre of the universe; who were accustomed to believe that God made the sun and moon and stars to shed light on us; and who fancied that the divine purpose in creating nature was to form a dwelling-place for man. The dogmatic elements of historical Christianity in like manner assumed their fixity by slow degrees under the dominance of Ptolemy's geocentric system of astronomy, and in harmony with a metaphysic which accepted that view of the universe. The discovery, published by Copernicus in 1543, by simply shifting the position of our globe in space, shook the ponderous fabric of scholastic theology to its foundations. The deductions made from his discovery by subsequent thinkers still more seriously compromised a large part of that edifice. The earth appeared not merely as a satellite of the sun; but the sun himself, with all his court of planets, took rank as only one among innumerable sidereal companies. Space spread into infinity. Up and down, heaven above and hell beneath, were now phrases of symbolical or metaphorical significance only. It was no longer possible to imagine that the celestial bodies had been created in order to give light by day and night. Man's station of eminence in the kosmos ceased to seem manifest. It became difficult to take the scheme of salvation, God's sacrifice of himself in the Second Person of the Trinity for the advantage of a race located on a third-rate planet, literally. Some mythical parts of the religion, which had previously been held as facts, were immediately changed into allegories. For instance, the ascension of Jesus from the mountain lost its value as an historical event when the brazen vault of heaven, or the crystal sphere on the outer surface of which God sat, had been annihilated; when there was no more up or down, and when a body lifted into ether would obey the same laws of attraction as a meteoric stone.

The Copernican discovery very materially influenced Christian dogma and mythology by thus converting at a stroke what had been previously accepted as a matter of literal and historical fact into symbol, allegory, metaphor. It humbled human pride, and destroyed the overweening sense of man's importance in the universe. The nature of this revolution in astronomy made it of necessity destructive to the external coatings and integuments of religion. At the same time, it stimulated the growth of a new metaphysic, the first manifestations of which we owe to Bruno, and which was destined to react upon theology through the idealistic speculations of the last two centuries.

III.

The disintegration of those factors which are merely temporal, and doomed to dissolution, in Christianity, has been advancing so rapidly, through the application of various critical methods and the growth of sciences, that little of a purely destructive influence was to be expected from the theory of Evolution. Some points, however, may arrest attention.

Preceded by geology and primitive anthropology, Evolution dealt a death-blow at the assumptions of human self-conceit. We have accepted the probability of man's development from less highly organised types of animal life with tolerable good-humour, after a certain amount of rebellious disgust. The study of pre-historical humanity, together with the suggestions of the Evolution hypothesis, render any doctrine of a Fall more and more untenable. Instead of Paradise, and man's sudden lapse from primal innocence, we are now convinced that history implies a slow and toilsome upward effort on the part of our ancestors from the outset.

Preceded, in like manner, by the demonstrated theories of Conservation and Correlation of Energies, Evolution de-

stroyed the old conception of miraculous occurrences. A miracle, a freak of power, is no longer conceivable in Nature; and if Lazarus were raised from the dead before our eyes, we should first ascertain the fact, and next proceed to investigate the law of the phenomenon. Evolution, in the last place, superseded scholastic teleology by more rational notions of order. The habit of mind which recognised particular design and providential interference in special adaptations of living creatures to their environment, has been superseded by what may be termed a consistently biological view of the universe. The whole scheme of things is now regarded as a single organism, advancing methodically through stages of its growth in obedience to inevitable laws of self-expansion. This does not dispel the mystery which surrounds life. It does not pretend, when rightly understood, to give a final or sufficient explanation of Being. Nor, again, does it yield the world to chance, or remove the necessity by which we postulate the priority of thought, intention, spirit, to all manifestations of material existence. But it compels us to regard this form-giving spiritual potency as inherent in the organism: as the law of its life, not as the legislation of some power extraneous to it. In another very important point Evolution has reacted destructively on popular Christianity. By penetrating our minds with the conviction that all things are in process, that the whole universe is literally in perpetual *Becoming*, it has rendered it impossible for us to believe that any one creed or set of opinions possesses finality. Religions, like all things that are ours and human, have their day of declension; nor can Christianity form an exception to the universal rule. What is perishable in its earthly historical manifestation must be eliminated: and the permanent spirit by which it is animated, the truth it reveals, will be absorbed into the structure of creeds destined successively to supersede it and be superseded.

IV.

The fundamental conception which underlies the Evolutionary method of thought is that all things in the universe exist in process. No other system has so vigorously enforced the truth that it is impossible to isolate phenomena from their antecedents and their consequents. No other system has given the same importance to apparently insignificant details and to apparently monstrous divergences from normal types, in so far as such details supply links in the sequence of development, or such divergences can be used to illustrate the growth of organism. It follows that the line of thought which we call Evolutionary infuses new vitality into history, into every study of the past, and into all branches of criticism. At the present moment I wish to contribute some considerations regarding the most obvious ways of applying it to the history of art and literature—not because this is a matter of first importance, but because I speak with firm personal conviction on the topic.

When I was a young man, in the sixties, I remember that we students of European culture had to choose between connoisseurs and metaphysicians for our guides. On the one hand were the people who praised the "Correggiosity of Correggio," or "swore by Perugino," or promulgated the "preciousness of Fra Angelico," as though Correggio, Perugino, and the Dominican painter of San Marco were respectively descended full-formed from the skies to instruct an unenlightened world. Each connoisseur sailed under his self-chosen flag, proclaimed his own proclivities, and preached the gospel of his particular taste. There were not wanting even folk who pinned their faith to Sir Joshua and the Caracci. Caprice on this side governed judgment; and what I have stated with regard to figurative art was no less true of poetry and literature. There seemed to be no light or leading in the chaos of opinion. On the other hand were

ranged the formal theorists, who constructed a scheme of art upon subjective principles. They bade us direct our minds to the idea, the *Begriff* of art; and having thence obtained a concept, we were invited to reject as valueless whatever would not square with the logical formula.

Between these opposed teachers, the pure connoisseurs and the pure metaphysicians, Goethe emerged like a steady guiding star. His felicitous summary of criticism, "Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen, resolut zu leben" (To live resolvedly in the whole, the good, the beautiful), came like a deliverance. Instinctively we felt that the central point for us, if we would erect criticism into a science, was not caprice, not personal proclivity, not particular taste, but a steady comprehension of the whole. How to grasp the whole, how to reach a point of view from which all manifestations of the human mind should appear as correlated, should fall into their proper places as parts of a complex organism, remained the difficulty.

Honour should here be rendered to M. Taine, who was among the first to apply natural physiological principles to the study of what is understood as culture. His method drew attention to the *milieu*, the ethnological conditions, the climatic and social environments, which modify each particular product of human genius in art and literature. He was on the right track; but there remained something stiff and formal, a something inconsistent with the subtlety of Nature, in his philosophy of culture. In particular, it did not make sufficient allowances for the resistance which the individual offers to his *milieu*, for the emergence in him of specific strains of atavism, and for the peculiar phenomena of mental hybrids.

Just then Darwin's and Spencer's publication of the Evolution theory made its decisive impact on the mind of Europe. We felt that here was the right way toward living and thinking in the whole. The steady determination to

regard all subjects of inquiry from the point of view of development delivered criticism from the caprice of connoisseurship and the whims of dilettantism. It superseded the attractive but too often vaporous generalisations of the logician by a sound method of analysis. It lent the charm of biography or narrative to what had previously seemed so dull and lifeless—the history of art or letters. Illuminated by this idea, every stage in the progress of culture acquired significance. The origins and incunabula of art, viewed in their relation to its further growth, ceased to have a merely antiquarian interest. Periods of decadence were explicable and intelligible on the principle that every organism, expanding from the germ, passing through adolescence to maturity, is bound at last to exhaust its motive force and perish by exaggerating qualities implicit in the mature type. Hybrids, in like manner, obtained a fresh instructiveness and value for students of the unmixed species.

It might perhaps be objected that I am claiming too much for the scientific impulse of the last half-century. Have not all histories, it will be said, at all periods of the world, been written in this way? Has not all criticism proceeded upon this method? I would recommend those who ask these questions to peruse Tiraboschi's "Storia della Letteratura Italiana," one of the most solid and valuable monuments of erudition; or if that is requiring too much from human patience, let them take up Hallam's "Literature of Europe." Next I would point to the magnificent criticism, in all parts instinct with genius, which our age owes to Mr. Ruskin. I think it will be found that neither in Tiraboschi's conscientious and exhaustive record of his nation's culture, nor in Mr. Ruskin's luminous discourse upon the principles of art and the merits or demerits of particular artists, does the specific note which marks the Evolutionist appear. The mind of neither of these men is directed to the study of a *process* in the past. They do not set themselves to tracing

and explaining what Goethe and Oken termed the *morphology* of their subject. I do not mean to assert that they must be wrong, and that Evolutionary historians and critics must be right. My purpose is to insist upon an important difference.

I admit that there is a danger in the exclusive application of the Evolutionary method, against which both historians and critics must be upon their guard. Absorption in the process we are studying may blunt our sensibility to relative degrees of moral and artistic excellence in the work we have to estimate. We may come to think that the demonstration of development is all that is required of us; whereas it is only the beginning of our task, the clue that guides us through the labyrinth of research, the principle which gives coherence to our exposition. We may be so interested, for example, in analysing how the dying tree of Italian painting put forth its final shoot in the Bolognese school, that we shall not express a due sense of the relative and intrinsic inferiority of the pictures produced in that decadent age. There is, I repeat, a danger of sacrificing individuality and blunting the edge of critical judgment if we attempt to live too resolutely in the whole. But, fortunately, all the vices, foibles, and passions of human nature tend in quite the opposite direction. Caprice and whim and partiality do not need to be encouraged. We run but little risk of exchanging these congenital defects for rigid method and relentless logic. Again, there is no reason why students who add interest to their labours by the inspiration of this idea—an idea which infuses life into every matter of inquiry—should therefore lose their faculty of judgment. He must be singularly stupid who does not perceive the immeasurable distance between Greene and Shakespeare, Shakespeare and Davenant, because he has demonstrated that Greene was necessary to the evolution of Shakespeare, and that Davenant was his inevitable successor. Such a man, if he writes a dull book under the

influence of Evolutionary ideas, would assuredly have written a still duller one without them.

V.

I pass now to that more difficult and delicate portion of my theme which concerns the higher region of religion, metaphysic, and morality. That remoulding and recasting process, which is for ever going forward in the intellectual no less than the corporeal organism, has been committed, for this century at least, to the custody of what is roughly termed Science.

The tendency of scientific ideas, in so far as these are remoulding thought in those high regions, is to spiritualise religion, to dissipate the materialistic associations which environ theology in its mythological stages, and to emancipate the individual from egotism in the presence of that universal Being of which he is a part, and to the manifestation of which he contributes.

When Cleanthes, the Stoic, wrote the prayer which I will presently translate, he projected a religion commensurate with modern Science. "Lead Thou me, Zeus," he prayed, "and thou world's Law, whithersoever I am by you appointed to go; for I will follow unreluctant; and yet should I refuse, through evilness (or cowardice) up-grown in me, none the less I shall surely follow."[1]

We cannot get beyond that: we need not seek to do so; for this prayer is compatible with every creed, and it contains the essence of absolute self-dedication.

By convincing us that the universe is one homogeneous whole, in which nothing can be lost and unaccounted for, through which there runs a continuity of energising forces, and of which we are indisputably conscious members, Science

[1] In another place Cleanthes declares that there is no higher guerdon for gods or mortals than to sing the praises of the universal Law—*κοινὸν ἀεὶ νόμον ἐν δίκῃ ὑμνεῖν.*

has lent deeper meaning to the Stoic prayer. But it has not, on that account, eliminated the conception of a Deity or effaced the noble humanities secured for us by many centuries of Christian faith. It cannot be too emphatically insisted on that much-dreaded Darwinism leaves the theological belief in a Divine Being untouched. God is not less God, nor is creative energy less creative, because we are led to suppose that a lengthy instead of a sudden method was employed in the production of the Kosmos.

VI.

The conceptions of God and Law tend to coalescence in the scientific theory of the universe. In other words, spirituality is restored to Nature, which comes to be regarded as a manifestation of infinite vitality. The Fathers of the Christian Churches, battling with corrupt Paganism, striving valiantly to secure monotheistic principles of theology, basing conduct upon hopes and terrors in the world beyond the grave, effected an artificial separation of man from Nature. They banned the logical and simple recognition of man's integration with the Kosmos, upon which the elder religions rested. Nature for many centuries was regarded as the evil thing, the contrary of Spirit. Science, which grew up in this uncongenial atmosphere, accepted the separation from the outset, and went on studying Nature as though it were external to the human soul. But this alienation of man from the surrounding universe, which constitutes him, and which he helps to constitute, can no longer be maintained. We must return with fuller knowledge to something like the earlier, more instinctive faith about the world, whereof ourselves, body and spirit, are part. And nothing seems more evident than that we are being led back to this point by the hand of Science, enemy as she is supposed to be of poetry, of mysticism, of spiritual contemplation.

The ground for this apparent paradox may thus be stated.

Science establishes the unity of the Kosmos, together with the exact correspondence and correlation of its parts. But when we begin to regard this unity with eyes from which the scales of Christian antagonism have fallen, we discover that we cannot think of it except as spiritual. The one only thing we can be said to know and to be sure of, is the paramount importance in ourselves of mind. *Cogito, ergo sum*, as the starting-point for speculation, may sound an antiquated formula, yet it contains incontestable truth, which is hourly verified by experience, and only too pompously proclaimed by ontologists. If, then, we are mind, and nothing in the last resort but mind, logic compels us to expect mind in that of which we are an integrating element, and from the total complex of which we cannot be dissevered. The last ambitious system of constructive metaphysics, that of Hegel, made the most of this position. But Hegel overstrained the point when he identified the world-mind with the human mind. His elaborate reasoning from subjective data has been rejected by the common sense of generations trained in the exploration of the actual universe. Man's thought does not make the world, into which man entered at a comparatively recent date, and on a relatively minor planet. Quite independent of his thought, the heavens, the earth, the rocks, the rivers, the forests, flowers, and animals, and birds, of which he obtains cognisance through his five senses, would enjoy their own existence. Most of them were prior to him in time, and it is only the vanity of egotism which makes him represent his thought as necessary to their being. The truth, however, remains that man is the highest expression of life upon this globe, and that his mind is the highest expression of his being.[1] What we know about the world is in our thought.

[1] The argument might be condensed here into a single sentence: "The truth, however, remains that we are what we are through thought; and we may reasonably infer that this is not limited to our condition, but that mind penetrates and animates all existence, forming the essential part of that which was, and is, and is to be."

For us, then, human thought is the world; but only for us. Our mind is not co-extensive with the universe; yet we may reasonably infer from its presence in ourselves that there is mind in the universe below us and above us. We are compelled to hypothesise an Universal Mind because of the manifest fact that we help to constitute the universe, which was, and is, and will be before, around, and after our phenomenal existence. Evolution, admitting no break of continuity in the universe, silently forces us to this conclusion; and it is only the attitude still maintained, in form at least, by Christianity towards Nature, which prevents our recognising the Spirit immanent and everywhere.

VII.

After speaking of a cosmic mind, it is of much importance to define what we mean by mind. To human beings mind appears in the form of consciousness and thinking. Thought is the highest manifestation of our consciousness, graduated upwards from rudimentary sensitivenesses and sensations, through perceptions, instincts stereotyped in what may be termed organic habits, states of memory, and so forth, into its final ratiocinative stage. At that point it eludes our observation, just as it eludes us, at the other end of the scale, in stages where we are inclined to doubt the existence of consciousness at all. We have sufficient proof that some of our primitive sensibilities, the lowest chords of consciousness in us, are shared by men with the coarsest types of animals, and even with plants. Among these may be reckoned muscular contractibility, and the faculty of alimentation. In like manner, many of our perceptions, instincts, and rougher processes of reasoning are shared by men with brutes. Memory, dreaming, inference, even a simple power of generalisation, are possessed by the animals nearest to humanity in organic development. It is, therefore, by no means clear that mind in all its phenomenal manifestations, inferior or superior

to man's, should be ratiocinative. That, indeed, is the differentia of mind in our own stage of being. Yet we believe that humanity forms the climax of a series which started from simple animated cells. And having admitted that there is no abrupt breakage between these cells and us in the long chain of organised existence, how can we refuse mind in its simpler form to those simpler organisations? It may even be queried whether our complex mode of being does not render us incapable of appreciating the degrees of consciousness in things lower than ourselves. Because attention is not roused in us by the peristaltic action, it does not follow that ascidians, who are all stomach, have not an acute consciousness of this, their principal activity. On the other hand, analogy leads us to believe that man is not the final product of Nature. Consequently we are justified in entertaining the belief that existences, higher in the scale of being, may be endowed with intellects more fully organised than ours. Such existences, possibly, transcend the ratiocinative stage of mind. Similar reasoning may be applied to what we call the inorganic realm. We can only seize form by thought, by mind, by intellect. Shall we not then be bold enough to say that all form—form in molecules, in crystals, in planetary systems, in the undulations of light and sound—is fundamentally a mode of mind? To call form merely a mode of matter loses meaning when we have abandoned the abrupt division between man and the rest of the animal and vegetable world. It is true that the transition from inorganic to organic phenomena has not yet been seized. But the doctrine of continuity in Nature ought to render us very doubtful as to the old-fashioned dichotomy, which places an impassable barrier between them. So long as mind was regarded as extraneous to Nature, as a prerogative given to man alone by God, the omnipresence of mind in every particle of the phenomenal universe was not apparent. External Nature could be regarded as a mechanical contrivance under those

conditions of belief. Science has forced us to abandon this position. At the same time, the continual experience of mind within ourselves precludes a gross irrational materialism. The fact that we merely know mind in its human differentia, and can form no conception at present of its manifestations in other stages of being, is plainly one of our abiding disabilities—the incapacity under which we suffer of transcending our own sphere. Yet I have already pointed out that the analysis of mind in man proves that intellect is only the highest function, within our range of vision, to which successive stages of vital organism ascend by complication of structure and development of consciousness.

We may approach this problem of the universal mind upon another path, following the indications suggested by the Correlation of Forces.

Mind appears to us human beings as the final synthesis of biological functions, attaining to self-consciousness by a gradual progression from the simplest forms of animated things to the most complex organism known to us—Man.

If we are serious Evolutionists—that is to say, if we refuse to recognise a breakage in the sequence which connects man with the lowest types of life upon the planet, and if we repudiate the hypothesis of special creation to account for the phenomenon which we term mind in its final elaboration known to us—then we are forced to admit that inorganic Nature is implicated in the process of mental development. We may not indeed be able at present to demonstrate the transition from inorganic to organic modes of the world-substance ; but we are brought to the following dilemma : either we must postulate the evolution of life and mind out of primordial inorganic elements, or we must postulate a special act of creation whereby the rudiments of mind were communicated together with life to the earliest organised beings. Accepting the latter alternative, we cease to be Evolutionists ; for we have conceded creative interference at one moment of

the universal sequence, which is tantamount to abandoning the main point of Evolutionary philosophy. Accepting the former alternative, and remaining Evolutionists, we are driven to the conclusion that mind was potentially present in the primordial elements out of which life, and man, as the crown of zoological life upon this globe, emerged.

This conclusion, to which the Evolutionist is driven, does not imply that mind, regarded as the final synthesis of biological functions in man, was not something apparently and qualitatively different in the inorganic world—as different, for example, to our senses and our intelligence as heat is from motion.

We are aware of mind as intelligence. We do not discover any sign of intelligence in the inorganic world. Yet we are compelled by Evolution to conceive of intelligence as the final outcome of vital processes which started from an inorganic basis.

When we apply the analogy of the Correlation of Forces to this problem, we may surmise that what appears as intelligence in the biological series was formerly the same power existing under another manifestation in the inorganic series, just as heat is a condition of motion. This would save us from assuming a break in the evolutionary process, and would enable us to comprehend how inorganic things seem irreconcilably alien to organic things when viewed from our present point of vision. In other words, the common substance of the world would now be thought of, in successive moments of its evolution, first as endowed with the capacity of form, next as endowed with the capacity of life and progressive consciousness in addition to form.

Thus, instead of destroying the belief that mind constitutes the whole universe, which we know alone through mind, the analogy of the Correlation of Forces helps us to conceive why mind appears to us at one period as inorganic form, and at the next period as organised vitality. We derive from it

some ground for expecting that the passage of inorganic into organic modes of the world-stuff will eventually be regarded in the same way as the metamorphosis of heat into motion is now conceived. Whether we choose to call that world-stuff by the name of Spirit or Matter signifies nothing; for these names are merely symbols, like the x and y of Algebra.

VIII.

Having come into being, as I said, under the dominance of theological ideas about the relation of the human soul to God and the world, Science has hitherto been of necessity positive and materialistic. The most earnest inquirers could not at once emancipate themselves from prejudices for or against the exclusive theories of spiritualism formulated by the Churches. Christian dogmatists abruptly divided the soul from Nature, regarded the universe as a machine created by a God external to it, and laid this earth, our dwelling-place, under the curse of sin and evil. Men of science dealt accordingly with Nature as something extraneous, outside the mind; as the object of inquiry, but not at the same time as the subject of the intellect that inquires. The wisest forbore from uttering opinions upon man's relation to the world; and this abstention, seeing that the word God was rarely found upon their pages, seeing that they did not need "that hypothesis of Deity," gained for them the reputation of atheists with the vulgar. Christianity itself was responsible for their position; but the world lost nothing by the positive and neutral spirit in which they had to work. On the contrary, it gained considerably; for, without mystical or theological bias, they have gradually been bringing home to our intelligence more and more convincingly the truth that we are part of Nature; and if in a true sense part, then the truest part of us, ourselves, our consciousness, our thought, our emotion, must be part of Nature; and Nature everywhere, and in all her parts, must contain what corresponds to

our spiritual essence. In this way Science, while establishing Law, has prepared the way for the identification of Law with God. I am far from asserting that any disciples of Science at the present moment have drawn this corollary from her teaching; what I want to indicate is the inevitable point of contact between Science and Religion.

Finding thought to be the very essence of man considered as a natural product, we are compelled to believe that there is thought, implicit or explicit, in all the products which compose this universe. Nothing can be clearer, as the result of three centuries of scientific industry, than that there is neither loss of elements nor abrupt separation of species in the Kosmos, but that the whole is wrought of the same ground materials and evolved in its multiplicity of forms out of the same fundamental constituents. If then we discover thought in man upon one plane of this immense development, how can we deny it to existences on other planes? How can we conceive that the primitive energies out of which the whole proceeded were not conscious or pregnant with consciousness? If mind is our sole reality and self, is it not the sole reality and self of all? Must we not maintain that, the universe being in one rhythm, things less highly organised than man possess consciousness, in the degrees of their descent less acute than man's? Must we not also surmise that ascending scales of existences more highly organised, of whom we are at present ignorant, are endowed with consciousness superior to man's? Paradoxical as this may seem, it is not incredible that the globe on which we live is more conscious of itself than we are of ourselves; and that the cells which compose our corporeal frame are gifted with a separate consciousness of a simpler kind than ours.

In this speculation of the universe, whether we advance toward the verge of mysticism or abide within the bounds of reverent abstention from such excursions, law—the law of

the world's life—appears as God, brought nearer to experience, the object of obedience, the ever-present source of quickening enthusiasm. To this power, in whom we live and move and have our being, in whom the infinitely great and infinitely small alike exist, we commit ourselves with the assurance that self, purged of egotism, is seeking its own best through dedication. We do not ask for crowns and thrones in the next world; we do not bargain for compensation which shall make earth's trials insignificant. Face to face with death, even the death of those whose love was unspeakably precious, we do not passionately demand again our darlings, or cling with tremulous persistence to the promise of immortality. Now, as formerly, the continuance of the individual after death remains a matter for hope and faith. Science as yet can neither affirm nor deny the life beyond the grave; but it teaches us that it is dangerous to appeal to personal desires upon this topic, and that St. Paul's audacious challenge, "If Christ be not risen, then are we of all men most wretched," belonged to a past stage of religious development. The confidence it inculcates is that nothing can come amiss to those who have brought their wills and wishes into accord with universal order. This will be stigmatised as optimism, I am well aware. It is certainly the antithesis of that puny pessimism which forms a marked sign of intellectual enfeeblement in the younger schools of German thought. To the pessimist we say—

> "Thou art sick of self-love, Malvolio,
> And taste with a distempered appetite."

It is not my present business to deal with pessimism, however, but to seek out how the scientific spirit is remoulding religion. Religion has been always optimistic; and whatever science is, it certainly is not pessimistic. The non-religious may draw conclusions from it which envenom life. Those, on the contrary, who naturally incline towards religion, will

9L570

find in it fresh aliment for masculine contentment. They recognise themselves as factors of a life which *is* the world, to the effectuation of which they each in their degree contribute, the scope and scheme of which, though ill understood by them, requires and must obtain their co-operation. Law and God—the order of the whole regarded as a process of unerringly unfolding energy, and that same order contemplated by human thought as in its essence mind-determined —have become for them so all in all, that a wish for self, an egotistical aspiration, is quelled at once as infantile, undisciplined, irrelevant. Their chief dread is that dread expressed by Cleanthes, namely, that peradventure their good-will should fail, and they be dragged along their path by force, instead of following with genial submission.

IX.

With such views regarding man's relation to the universe it is not difficult to combine what I have called "the noble humanities secured for us by Christianity." Nor is it necessary to abandon the sense of allegiance to and dependence on a Supreme Being, which hitherto has constituted the mainspring of religion. The idea of God, attenuated from its rudimentary gross forms through polytheism of many sorts and monotheism of several degrees of crudity, has recently become a highly rarefied metaphysical conception of divine personality. This process of gradual attenuation, which has reduced the Christian pantheon with startling rapidity to an almost diaphanous residuum of abstract theism, justifies to some extent the assumption that we have reached the vanishing-point of theology altogether. Certainly, theology, considered as a science, can never be so substantial, can never deal with notions and definitions so precise, as in the previous anthropomorphic stages. But a cautious speculator may well pause to consider whether the old impulse of mankind toward theolatry or God-service be

not entering upon a new, more spiritual, no less vital, phase of its activity; whether the idea of God, instead of vanishing or being dissipated, or yielding, as some surmise, to the paramount idea of Humanity, is not about to assume fresh actuality in correspondence with our scientific knowledge of the universe and with our enlarged notions regarding the wants and demands of man considered as a social being.

A retrospective glance over the development of Christianity may be useful here, since theism, in any coming stage of development, must resume what is residual and still living in the Christian faith.

Primitive Christianity fused the Jewish conception of God as Jehovah with the Greek philosophical conception of God as Law; these being the two grand monotheistic ideas then present to the world.[1] What was tribal in the Jewish conception vanished under Christ's preaching of the Fatherhood of God, and St. Paul's extension of this principle to the entire human race. In a short space of time, Christ, considered as being himself God, the divine ideal of suffering humanity, the infinite power of mercy and self-sacrifice, but also the inexorable power of justice destined to judge the world, thrust Jehovah into the background. Simultaneously, the Greek conception of God, as prime principle of law and order in the universe, disappeared beneath a multitude of metaphysical definitions, for the most part designed to establish the divinity of Christ, and to bring this dogma into accordance with previous stages of religious and speculative thought. Independent of the Trinity, as it were, there grew up a secondary series of conceptions, which centred in the man-God Christ: his mother, his *cortège* of saints, disciples, apostles, martyrs, shared the adoration which was paid to

[1] This point has been ably brought out by Mr. J. Cotter Morrison, in his "Service of Man," p. 182; a book which I had not read before I wrote this essay.

him. This highly anthropomorphic and almost polytheistic Christianity, devotionally more potent than the metaphysical fabric out of which it had emerged, controlled the imagination of the Middle Ages. But, at their close, a thorough-going mental revolution was effected. Through criticism, Science sprang into being; and Science, so far as it touches the idea of Deity, brought once more into overwhelming prominence the Greek conception of God as Law. On the other hand, the claims of humanity upon our duty and devotion grew in importance, so that the spirit and teaching of Christ, the suffering, the self-sacrificing, the merciful, and at the same time the just, survived the decay of his divinity. In other words, the two factors of primitive Christianity are again disengaged, and again demand incorporation in a religion which shall combine the conceptions of obedience to supreme Law and of devotion to Humanity, both of which have been spiritualised, sublimed, and rendered positive by the action of thought and experience. What religion has to do, if it remains theistic, is to create an enthusiasm in which the cosmic emotion shall coalesce with the sense of social duty, in which self-abnegating submission to the natural order and self-abnegating service of man shall be regarded as the double function of all human beings in the evolution of the universe. Such an enthusiasm makes serious demands upon unselfishness; for God, revealed by Science as the Order of the Universe or Law, is divested of anthropomorphic personality, while the claims of humanity become daily more exacting. Yet Religion has always been able to draw largely upon the capital of unselfishness in men, and to find her drafts accepted. Meanwhile, such enthusiasm offers much to the individual; it frees him from those arbitrary notions —original sin, grace, salvation and damnation, election— which were the banes and bugbears of anthropomorphic theology. The fear of God, as of a severe parent or a hard taskmaster, disappears. The love of men our brethren

succeeds to that very shadowy and subjective emotion which was called the love of God.

The Sermon on the Mount retains its value when we read it as the preacher of that sermon meant it to be read. The virtues of faith and hope and love do not fail for want of exercise. We still exclaim: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!" We still acknowledge our complete and absolute dependence on the power which brought us hither and will conduct us hence. Love, the greatest of these three, will always form the binding element of human existence. Science institutes no monastery, no sacerdotal celibacy, no sacrifice of natural affection for the attainment of personal salvation. And what an extension of its province has the virtue of love received from Science! It is no longer confined to families and friends, and fellow-countrymen, and foreign people whom we wish to convert. It covers the whole creation and the world of man's inventions. It is co-extensive with discovery, commensurate with law and life; for curiosity is love. How far more lovingly we look on Nature now than when we regarded it as alien and cursed. It is certainly natural, when inspired by Science, to feel true sympathy with beasts and insects, birds of the air and fishes of the sea, trees and flowers, and everything that shares the life divine which throbs in us. Next to love comes humility; and I need hardly point out how Science edifies that virtue. It teaches us that lower forms of life, such, for instance, as parasites which prey upon our bodies in disease, have their place in the scheme, the same *raison d'être*, while still uncombated, as man.

We need not be afraid lest the religious spirit I have been attempting to describe, should induce a mere habit of indolent resignation to things as they at present are. On the contrary, the very essence of Science in general and of Evolution in particular, is to stimulate energy, combative, aggressive, struggling after higher stages. It knows nothing of the

brutish crass indifference and ignorance of the monastic mind, awaiting beatification. It makes us certain that effort is the indispensable condition of advancement. If we recognise the divine life in parasites, we do not mean to acquiesce in their domination. They have ceased to be regarded as a divine scourge for our sins; they have become a divine means for urging us to efforts after their elimination. The soul possessed of Evolutionary religion, penetrated with the gospel of our century, runs no peril of lapsing into the hebetude of decadent Buddhism, or of exclaiming with folded hands, "Whatever is, is well." That formula will have to be exchanged for, "Whatever is, is well; but nothing really is which is not in progressive and militant movement."

This exposition might be carried further. It might be shown how all the elements of morality are not displaced, but remoulded by the scientific spirit; how the mysteries of sin, pain, disease, for instance, are quite as well accounted for by formulas of evolutionary strife and imperfect development as by the old hypothesis of a devil; how duty and volition can assume their places in a scheme of advance by selection and modification whereof the individual is conscious, quite as well as in any orthodox system which steers between the Scylla of creative Deity and the Charybdis of man's liberty to act.

People are afraid lest a strictly scientific or deterministic view of human development should paralyse morality by encouraging the notion that we are only helpless cogwheels in a vast machine. Whatever may be the real explanation of man's liberty to choose and act, face to face with the inexorable sequence of the universe, it is certain that men live under the same law as that which governs all other organised beings upon this globe, the law of struggle for existence. A recognition of metaphysical fatalism does not destroy this law, or relieve us from the necessity of acting by strife and struggle in the effort to retain our hold on being and to advance toward higher stages. Determinism, as commonly

now held, accepts the theory of man's control within certain limits over his own character. We have come to doubt the power of the will to effect a sudden change from vice to virtue or the contrary; we regard the doctrine of repentance and grace *in articulo mortis* as a hindrance rather than an incentive to right conduct; we hold that the individual can only direct, cultivate, and repress tendencies in himself and others. This, however, implies the power of resolution to form good habits and the determination to enforce them by a continued exercise of volition. A man wills to minimise his tendencies toward vice by encouraging his opposite tendencies toward virtue, quite as much as the man wills who is supposed to change his vicious nature in one moment. The difference is that the process implied by self-culture and formation of habits is a lengthy one, and that the seductive prospect of living in sin with the hope of dying in grace is removed. Thus Science, far more stringently than Christianity, cries to the sinner, "Be not deceived: God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Nevertheless it is clear that determinism, unless it renounces ethics altogether, occupies an illogical position; for it has not overcome the old antinomy of free-will and necessity. It has not explained the possibility of willing to will, apart from the phenomenon of willing as a mode of consciousness. But acquiescence in the illogical forms part of the duty of rational beings, who have become conscious of their limitations, who understand the inevitable conditions of intellectual progress. We must not expect Science suddenly to explain the categorical imperative. Nor must we expect that it will make the existence of sin, pain, disease, want, the inequalities of life in all its phases, the waste that goes on everywhere in Nature, at once intelligible. Only I cannot see how the cosmic enthusiasm fails more conspicuously than Hebrew or than Christian theology face to face with these problems. I cannot see how the conception of universal order, wherein

human beings play their inevitable parts, is more destructive to volition than the conception of an all-creative, all-controlling, all-foreseeing deity. I cannot see that Science has rendered men indifferent to the sufferings of their fellows, or that it has enfeebled their courage, their sense of duty, and their energy in action. I cannot see that they are less sensitive to human hardship than the orthodox of Dante's stamp, who serenely acquiesced in the exclusion of unbaptized souls from happiness for ever. Meanwhile the soundness of the scientific method gives us some right to hope that illumination may eventually be thrown by it upon even the obscurest puzzles of experience. Through it, for the first time, we seem to have obtained some rational control over circumstance. Instead of excluding hope, this new gospel enables us to live daily and hourly in what Blake called "eternity's sunrise," the dawn of ever-broadening light and ever-soaring expectation.

Men are always in too great a hurry. More than eighteen centuries have elapsed since the apostles awaited the immediate coming of their Lord. He has not yet come in the way they hoped for; and those eighteen centuries now form by far the most important, the best-filled, period of history. During them we have learned gradually to disbelieve in a speedy dissolution of the world; and lately we have been brought to face the probability that men will last for many millions of years upon this planet. With that thought in our minds, let us look back upon man's past existence. How dim are human memory and records with respect to anything which happened four thousand years ago! With what continually accelerated impetus has consciousness been growing and expanding in the race at large! Then let us cast our eyes forward through the tens of hundreds of thousands of years to come. Surely we can afford to exercise a little patience, trusting that, if not for us or for our children, yet for men, our late posterity, more insight will be granted and

their clarity of vision strengthened. This, then, is the promise of faith extended to religious souls by Science. "Ah! but," it may be urged, "that is making too large a demand upon unselfishness! Shall men seek nothing for themselves?" I turn to Christians of the old school, and ask whether the renouncement of self, the will to live for others, the desire to glorify God, be not fundamental portions of their creed? These have always been preached as virtues. Now is the time to apply them in pure earnest as principles of conduct. Should it be objected that the promises which made these virtues palatable are withdrawn, we must remember that we are no longer children for whom the health-giving draught has to be sweetened with honey. Virtue has always been said to be its own reward, and to some extent this is true. At any rate, Science, with far more cogency than any theological system, proves that vice is its own punishment. There is, moreover, some satisfaction surely in contributing to the advance of humanity, from whom we derive everything, who expects from us so much. Without being Positivists, we may learn this lesson from the church of Auguste Comte.[1]

My argument has led me into a lay-sermon, more calculated to send people to sleep in some lecture-room than to arrest their busy eyes as they turn the pages of this book. It is time to quit the pulpit. But as I opened this part of my discourse with a Stoic's prayer, I will close it with a hymn by Goethe. The prayer sufficiently represents the submission and self-dedication demanded by the scientific spirit of religion; the hymn expresses its aspiration and

[1] While preparing this essay for the press, I came for the first time (I am sorry to say) upon the admirable article of Professor Dowden on "The Scientific Movement in Literature." (Studies in Literature, 4th Edition, 1887.) Some of the conclusions to which he has been led, correspond to those I have been stating here, though he has not committed himself to any mystical and pantheistic speculation. It is an essay which ought to be read and studied attentively.

enthusiasm. How far Goethe had studied the works of Giordano Bruno I know not, but in these stanzas he conveys, frigidly perhaps, yet faithfully, something of the burning faith which animated that extraordinary prophet of the scientific creed.[1]

To Him, who from eternity, self-stirred,
Himself hath made by His creative word!
To Him, Supreme, who causeth faith to be,
Trust, love, hope, power, and endless energy!
To Him, who, seek to name Him as we will,
Unknown, within Himself, abideth still!

Strain ear and eye, till sight and sense be dim;
Thou'lt find but faint similitudes of Him:
Yea, and thy spirit, in her flight of flame,
Still strives to gauge the symbol and the name:
Charmed and compelled, thou climb'st from height to height,
And round thy path the world shines wondrous bright;
Time, space, and size, and distance cease to be,
And every step is fresh infinity.

What were the God who sat outside to scan
The spheres that 'neath His fingers circling ran?
God dwells within and moves the world and moulds,
Himself and Nature in one form enfolds;
Thus all that lives in Him, and breathes, and is,
Shall ne'er His puissance, ne'er His spirit miss.

The soul of man, too, is an universe;
Whence follows it that race with race concurs
In naming all it knows of good and true,
God—yea, its own God; and, with homage due,
Surrenders to His sway both earth and heaven;
Fears Him, and loves, where place for love is given.

[1] The translation of Goethe's "Proemium to Gott und Welt," which follows above, was made by me many years ago, and was first printed in the *Spectator*. It gave me pleasure when Professor Tyndall quoted it in one of his volumes of essays, as expressing the religion to which Science can ally itself.

ON THE APPLICATION OF EVOLUTIONARY PRINCIPLES TO ART AND LITERATURE.

I.

It is a common habit to speak of Darwinism and the Evolutionary philosophy as though they were identical. This is a mistake. Yet, when we consider the luminous results and decisive impact of Darwin's discoveries, the mistake is neither unnatural nor inexcusable. It has, however, the disadvantage of fastening our minds on biological problems, as though these alone were capable of an evolutionary solution. Other issues involved in the philosophy are thrust into the background.

Evolution implies belief in cosmic unity, in the development of the universe on one consistent plan. It implies the rejection of miraculous interferences, abrupt leaps and bounds in Nature. The Evolutionist feels sure that if he could trace the present back through all its stages to the period of origins, the process whereby that incalculably distant past has advanced to this present would be found a gradual unbroken chain of sequences. For him, the genius of a Newton or a Shakespeare is the ultimate known product of elemental matter shaped by energies and forces.

Sir Charles Lyell established geology upon evolutionary principles. Charles Darwin proved that biology, the science of the origins and development of life upon our earth, can only be studied with sound results upon the same principles. Herbert Spencer has applied the evolutionary method to

every branch of knowledge, including social institutions in his survey.

Professor Huxley, the most brilliant champion of Darwinism in the lists of polemical discussion, has recently stated his great master's relation to evolutionary science in clear and precise language.[1] While claiming venerable antiquity and a widespread *a priori* acceptance for this philosophical conception, he reserves for Darwin the merit of having demonstrated its efficiency *a posteriori* in one department of knowledge, and that the most immediately interesting to human beings.

Evolution, in its largest sense, may be defined as the passage of all things, inorganic and organic, by the action of inevitable law, from simplicity to complexity, from an undifferentiated to a differentiated condition of their common stock of primary elements. We have accepted the evolutionary theory for geology, or the history of the earth's crust. We have accepted it for biology, or the history of life upon this planet. The next question is, how we can apply it to the history of the human mind in social institutions, religions, morality, literature, art, language. To this question the first answer must be: certainly not in the same way as that in which we have applied it to the history of the earth's crust, and to the history of vegetable and animal life. The subject-matter is different. Nothing can be gained by transferring the language of biological science to the study of mental products. Nothing can be gained by attempting to treat successive stages of society and successive modes of thought as though they were geological strata. In like manner, nothing is gained by transferring the method of geology to biology, and *vice versâ*. Inorganic and organic matter being still disconnected in our thought, each requires its own species of analysis, a different system of investigation, and a separate

[1] "Life of Charles Darwin," vol. ii. pp. 180, 186.

nomenclature. Yet biology and geology have this in common, that both are evolutionary sciences. The question now is whether mind, which is a function of the most highly organised animals, can be treated upon the principles which are recognised in those two sciences.

Biology, having entered upon the evolutionary stage, brings mankind with it. We are therefore justified in expecting that anthropology will tend more and more to become an evolutionary science, developing a method and a nomenclature of its own. But anthropology includes psychology, morality, history in all its branches—whatever constitutes mankind. These subordinate departments must therefore submit to treatment upon evolutionary principles, unless it should be proved that the old distinction between mind and matter has to be maintained, and that evolution is only useful in explaining the laws of material development. If such a conclusion be arrived at, it will involve the hypothesis that Nature, including living creatures, pursues a process from the simple to the complex, but that mind is acquired from without at a certain point of that process by some living things which are a product of the process. In other words, mind will have to be accepted as destroying the coherence of the universal order.

Our growing sense of cosmic unity renders such a dualistic hypothesis improbable. The comparative study of intelligence in animals and men does not tend to confirm it. Meanwhile, what is known about the advance of mankind from savagery to civilisation — recent investigation into the origins of mythology, language, and religion, together with the remarkable additions made by Francis Galton to the science of heredity—encourage the expectation that mind in its historical development will eventually be treated upon evolutionary principles.

These observations are intended to introduce certain mental phenomena which invite an evolutionary explanation.

The cases I mean to discuss have this point in common: A certain type of literature or art manifests itself, apparently by casual occurrence, in a nation at a given epoch. If favourable conditions for its development are granted, it runs a well-defined course, in which every stage is connected with preceding and succeeding stages by no merely accidental link; and when all the resources of the type have been exhausted, it comes to a natural end, and nothing but *débris* is left of it. Such types suggest the analogy of organic growth. If the analogy be not fancifully strained, it may be helpful in keeping our attention fixed upon the salient features of the phenomenon in question. This, to put the matter briefly, is the development of a complex artistic structure out of elements existing in national character, which structure is only completed by the action of successive generations and individual men of genius, all of whom in their turns are compelled to contribute either to the formation of the rudimentary type, or to its perfection, or to its decline and final dissolution.[1]

II.

Criticism has hitherto neglected the real issues of what is meant by development in art and literature. We are indeed familiar with phrases like "rise and decline," "flourishing period," "infancy of art." But the inevitable progression from the embryo, through ascending stages of growth to maturity, and from maturity by declining stages to decrepitude and dissolution, has not been sufficiently insisted on. We are instinctively unwilling to undervalue individual effort. Our pride and sense of human independence rebel against the

[1] The type so produced might have been compared to a nation's thought projected in art—to such a thought as becomes a poem in a single man's work—but which can find expression only through a hundred workers. It differs, however, from any particular work of art in this, that it does not manifest itself as a simple whole. It describes a curve of ascent and descent before it is accomplished.

belief that men of genius obey a movement quite as much as they control it, and even more than they create it. Yet this is the conclusion to which facts, interpreted by historical and scientific methods, lead us; and the position we seem forced to assume, though it throws personal achievement somewhat into the shade, is concordant with the spirit of a scientific and a democratic epoch. At first sight, the individual lessens; but the race, the mass, from which the individual emerges, and of which he becomes the spokesman and interpreter, gains in dignity and greatness. After shifting the centre of gravity from men as personalities to men as exponents of their race and age, we gain a new interest in the history of art, a new sense of the vitality and spiritual solidarity of human thought in the most vigorous epochs. We learn to appreciate the labours of those who in obscurity laid the first foundations for some noble intellectual edifice. We deal more equitably and more sympathetically with those who were perforce obliged to carry art forward through its decadence to final diminution and extinction. Nor, though the individual seems to lessen, will this ultimately appear to be the case. Pheidias and Shakespeare are not less than they were because we know them as necessary to a series. Their eminence remains their own.

We have no means at present of stating precisely how or at what moment the germ of a specific type of art is generated in a nation. It often appears that the first impulse toward creativeness is some deep and serious emotion, some religious enthusiasm, or profound stirring of national consciousness. To transmute this impulse into the sphere of art taxes the energies of the first generation of artists, and the form appears to emerge spontaneously from the spirit of the nation as a whole. Unless we knew that nothing is accidental we should be tempted to say that the form of the Attic drama in Greece, the form of the Shakespearian drama in England, was settled by chance. One thing, meanwhile, is certain. The germ,

however generated, is bound to expand; the form, however determined, controls the genius which seeks expression through its medium. In the earliest stages of expansion the artist becomes half a prophet, and "sows with the whole sack," in the plenitude of superabundant inspiration. After the original passion for the ideas to be embodied in art has somewhat subsided, when the form is fixed, and its capacities can be serenely measured, but before the glow and fire of enthusiasm have faded out, there comes a second period. In this period art is studied more for art's sake, but the generative potency of the first founders is by no means exhausted. For a while, at this moment, the artist is priest, prophet, hierophant, and charmer all in one. More conscious of the laws of beauty, more anxious about the exponent form than his predecessors were, he makes some sacrifice of the idea in order to meet the requirements of style. But he does not forget that beauty by itself is insufficient to a great and perfect work, nor has he lost his interest in the cardinal conceptions which vitalise a nation's most significant expression of its soul through art. During the first and second stages which I have indicated, the people turns out, through its interpreters, poets and artists, a number of master-pieces—the earlier of them rough-hewn, archaic, cyclopean, pregnant with symbolism, rich in anticipation—the later, exquisite in their combination of full thought and spiritual intensity with technical perfection, with grace, with the qualities of free and elevated beauty appropriate to the elaborated type. But now the initial impulse is declining; the cycle of animating ideas has been exhausted; the taste of the people has been educated, and its spirit has been manifested in definite forms, which serve as ideal mirrors to the race of its own qualities, and bring it to a knowledge of itself. Conceptions which had all the magic of novelty for the grandparents, become the intellectual patrimony of the grandchildren. It is impossible to return upon the past; the vigour of those former makers

may survive in their successors, but their inspiration has taken shape for ever in their works. And that shape abides, fixed in the habits of the nation. The type cannot be changed, because the type grew itself out of the very nature of the people, who are still existent. What then remains for the third generation of artists? They have either to reproduce their models, and this is what true genius will not submit to, and what the public refuses to accept from it; or else they have to extract new motives from the perfected type, at the risk of impairing its strength and beauty, with the certainty of disintegrating its spiritual unity. The latter course is always chosen, inevitably, as we now believe, and by no merely wilful whim of individual craftsmen. Nay, the very artists who begin to decompose the type and to degrade it, and the public who applaud their ingenuity, and dote with love upon their variations from the primal theme, are alike unconscious that the decadence has already arrived. This, too, is inevitable and natural, because life is by no means exhausted when maturity is past, and the type still contains a wealth of parts to be eliminated. Less deeply interested in the great ideas by which they have been educated, and of which they are in no sense the creators, incapable of competing on the same ground with their elders, the artists of this third period are forced to go afield for striking situations, to strain sentiment and pathos, to accentuate realism, to subordinate the harmony of the whole to the melody of details, to sink the prophet in the artist, the hierophant in the charmer. There yet remains another stage of decadence, when even these resources latent in the perfect type have been exhausted. Then formality and affectation succeed to spontaneous and genial handling; technical skill declines; the meaning of the type, projected from the nation's heart and soul in its origin, comes to be forgotten. Art has fulfilled the round of its existence in that specific manifestation, and sinks into the dotage of decrepitude, the sleep of winter.

III.

A familiar example shall first be chosen from the history of English literature. It is what we know as the Elizabethan Drama, a type of art which completed its evolution in little more than half a century. When Miracle-plays, which England possessed in common with other European nations, though in a form specific to herself, had been developed to the utmost, certain episodes from the semi-epical dramatic cycle detached themselves from the unwieldy mass. Comedy found its germ in those lighter scenes which had always been conceded to the popular appetite for entertainment. Realistic drama emerged from the story of the woman taken in adultery, and from the biography of Magdalen. The History-play had its origin in subsidiary pieces adapted from the Apocrypha, of which the "Story of Godly Queen Esther" may serve as an example.

At this point the allegorical elements implicit in the Mediæval Miracle assumed a leading part in the disintegration of the ancient structure. Moralities paved the way for the dramatic analysis of character, which took a more definite shape in Heywood's Interludes. Minor comic and realistic motives, already detached in the subordinate scenes which enlivened the Miracle, coalesced with this psychological form of the nascent drama. Independent plays, partly historical, partly tragic, on subjects connected with Biblical history, such as *King Darius* and *Cambyses*, were prepared for separate presentation. At the same time, two principal personages of the Miracle, Herod and the Devil, extended their influence throughout the transitional phase upon which the theatre then entered.

We are able by the help of documents, to set forth the opportunities for secular dramatic representation to which the custom of Miracle-playing led. Stages were erected in the yards of inns. The halls of abbeys and great houses

welcomed companies of strolling actors. At last theatres for the public arose in the suburbs of London ; they were simple wooden structures, partly open to the air. The small scale and the beggarly equipment of these theatres need to be insisted on, since the peculiar form of the English Drama depended in no small measure on these external circumstances.

Resuming the points already mentioned, we find that episodical farces, histories, and tragic pieces, together with the specialised allegories called Moralities and Interludes, usurped upon the colossal stationary fabric of the Miracle. Miracle-plays continued to be represented at stated intervals. But a new dramatic type had come into existence. To this we give the name of the Romantic Drama. In its beginnings, as its origin appeared to be casual, this type was undecided and received but little attention from the cultivated classes. Yet it was destined to survive many perils, to realise itself, and to pass with astonishing speed to fixity in Marlowe, to perfection in Shakespeare, to over-ripeness in Beaumont and Fletcher, to decadence in Davenant.

Here we have to turn aside and notice the influences of the new learning and the Italian Renaissance, as these were felt in England. Cultivated scholars and the court, critics like Sidney, men of letters like the authors of "Gorboduc" and the "Misfortunes of Arthur," threw the weight of their precepts and their practice into the scale against the popular type of drama, which was as yet only in its stage of infancy. For a while it seemed as though the pseudo-classical principles of the Italian stage, derived mainly from Seneca and the Roman comic poets, might be imposed upon our theatre. But the shoot of the Romantic Drama, which had risen spontaneously from the crumbling masses of the Mediæval Miracle, possessed the vigour and assimilative faculty of expansive life. A group of lettered poets, including Greene, Peele, Nash, Lodge, and Kyd, took part precisely at this

juncture with the vulgar. They lent their talents to the improvement of the type, which had already gained the affections of the English people. They systematised the amorphous matter of farce, history, and fable under the form of a regular play, with an action divided into five acts. They introduced classical learning and conceited diction. But they did not alter the radically Romantic character of the type. Some features, including the part of the Vice, which were otiose survivals from the Miracle and the Morality, dropped out at this stage of evolution.

Marlowe, joining this band of cultured playwrights, who had already turned the scale against the "courtly makers," next claims our whole attention. Marlowe ennobled the rough material of the Romantic Drama, and made it fit to rank with the Classical Drama of Athens in her glory. This he achieved by raising dramatic blank verse to a higher power, and by his keen sense of what is serious and impassioned in art. Without altering the type, he adopted so much from humanism as it was capable of assimilating. In his hands the thing became an instrument of power and beauty.

Shakespeare was content to use the form refined and fixed by Marlowe. He developed it fully in all its parts, according to its own capacities. There is no process but one of gradual progression discernible between the few examples of the earlier Romantic Drama we possess, and *Macbeth* or *Measure for Measure*. The germ has simply grown and effloresced.

At the side of Shakespeare stands Ben Jonson, in whom we observe an interesting example of the literary hybrid. Jonson did not succeed in freeing himself altogether from the influences of his race and age. His plays belong in large measure to the Romantic type. Yet his humanistic training warped him to such an extent that he stood outside the circle of his compeers, protesting in theory and in practice against the genius of Romantic Drama.

After this point, it remains to notice how the dramatic form, fixed by Marlowe and perfected by Shakespeare, begins to break up. It has realised itself and reached completion. What followed was a stage of gradual disintegration. Motives suggested by the supreme masters were elaborated in their details by men like Webster, Tourneur, Ford. We trace an effort to extract its last capabilities from the type. The complex is reduced to its constituents, and these are handled separately. Poetry runs over into eloquence and rhetoric in the work of Fletcher and his kind, who display a lack of artistic conscientiousness nowhere hitherto observable. Plays are made by pattern, as in the case of Massinger and Shirley. A new generation, without creative force, continue the tradition of their predecessors by exaggeration of motives, isolation of elements, facile and conscious imitation.

Soon this stage of decadence leads to one of decrepitude. The incoherences of Davenant, Crowne, and Wilson, illuminated here and there by flashes of the old fire, prove that those elements of weakness which the Romantic Drama contained in its infancy, but which were controlled by strenuous force in the periods of adolescence and maturity, have reasserted themselves in its senility. To advance further, to save the type from ruin, was impossible. The Romantic Drama had been played out. All its changes had been rung ; the last drop of its vital sap had been exhausted. Even if the Puritans had refrained from ostracising actors, the Elizabethan theatre could not have been continued.

Such, to indicate the outlines of this subject rapidly, is the history of the rise, progress, decline, and dissolution of what we call Elizabethan Drama. The Evolutionist differs from previous students mainly in this, that he regards the totality of the phenomena presented as something necessitated by conditions to which the prime agents in the process, Marlowe and even Shakespeare, were subordinated. For him, this type of art exhibits qualities analogous to those of an organic

complex undergoing successive phases of germination, expansion, efflorescence, and decay, which were independent of the volition of the men who effected them. To him the interest of Sackville and Norton, of Hughes and Sidney, of Jonson and his followers, consists in this: that they were unable, by thwarting or counteracting its development, to arrest its course, or to import nutriment from alien sources into the structure which it was bound to evolve from embryonic elements. When everything which the embryo contained had been used up in the formation of structure, it came to an end.

IV.

The law of sequence, which I am attempting to describe, admits of wide and manifold demonstration. Indeed, the more we study those types of art which are in a true sense national, which have occupied the serious attention of whole peoples for considerable periods, and which are not the sporadic products of culture or of personal capacity, the more shall we become convinced that its operation is universal. I have pictured those phases of incipient and embryonic energy, of maturely perfected type, of gradual disintegration, and of pronounced decadence, under the metaphor of organic development and dissolution. But it must be remembered that this is, after all, a metaphor. It would, in many respects, have been quite as appropriate to choose a simile from the expansive force which carries projectiles for some space above the earth, and failing, leaves them to sink down again inert. That figure, allowing for its purely symbolic value, nicely expresses the curve described by art in one of the great movements under consideration—its vehement and fiery upward-rising, its proud sustention at a certain elevation, and its declension by almost imperceptible gradations into the quiescence of spent energy. We are, however, so far as yet from having penetrated the true essence

of organic growth, or of expansive force applied to projectiles, or of human nature working for a common end in national art, that it is wiser not to dwell upon the metaphorical aspects and analogies of the topic under discussion. Metaphors, indeed, can hardly be avoided in this case. But we must strictly bear in mind that they are metaphors, imported from various sources to figure forth the phenomena of mental processes, which seem to possess an independence of their own, and a law of progression which admits of no alteration. Putting metaphors therefore in their proper place of subordination, our main object is to ascertain whether the successive stages which I attempted to describe in the foregoing sections, can be traced in many of the larger manifestations of art, and whether we are justified in soberly maintaining that individual genius is incapable of abruptly altering their sequence.

The example I have already adduced from the English Drama in the reigns of Elizabeth and James corroborates the principle on which I am insisting. Owing to the abundance of materials at our disposal, and to the short period in which so important an evolution was performed, it is indeed very nicely adapted to my purpose. But enough has been already said upon this single instance; and all exact students of English literature are so well acquainted with the subject-matter, that each man can decide for himself whether the Shakespearian Drama fulfils the conditions I have indicated.

In the evolution of the Attic Drama, the same sequence is clearly marked. Behind the playwrights of Athens, for a background, looms the huge Homeric Epos, performing a part analogous to that of the cyclical Miracle-plays of Mediæval England. Just when the energy of the Rhapsodes had reached the point of exhaustion, lyrical dramatists began "to gather up the fragments from the rich Homeric table." This saying is attributed to Æschylus; and it accurately

describes the relation of the earliest Greek playwrights to the epical body of mythology and legend, which they handled by another method. The Drama had small beginnings, apparently in choral songs, to which the recitations of one or more persons setting forth an action came to be superadded. But occasional and arbitrary as this lyrical form may seem to have been, it determined the type of the accomplished drama; nor were material circumstances in the Greek theatres, as in those of London, wanting which confirmed the type, and helped to make it what we call Classical as distinguished from Romantic. Most important of these circumstances was the large size of the public buildings used for dramatic exhibitions, with their long shallow stage, and orchestra adapted to the celebration of Dionysiac rites. To these details were due the stationary sculpturesque character of Attic tragedy, the employment of masks and buskins, the prominent part assigned to the chorus, and the conduct of violent action off the stage. Classical drama, from the mere character of its environments, could not be so mobile, could not make such direct appeals to the senses and the fancy of the audience, as the drama which sprang up in booths and narrow wooden boxes. The former had affinities to bas-reliefs on temple fronts, the latter to a puppet-show. Once formed, the Greek type subsisted till its dissolution; even the mechanical attempt to revive it by a Roman poet (Seneca perhaps) under very altered conditions, when the significance of the original form was lost, reproduced the lyrical element and the stationary sculpturesque mode of presentation which was proper to the Attic stage.

What we dimly know about Thespis and Phrynichus proves that the dramatic type initiated by the earlier Bacchic poets underwent in their hands a process of expansion similar to that which Greene and his companions gave to the Romantic plays of England. Æschylus, like Marlowe, but

with a tenfold weight of spiritual force, determined and fixed the type unalterably. He exhibited the mythus chosen for each special work in its entirety, and allowed full prominence to the religious idea which formed the kernel of the elder drama of his predecessors. At the same time he produced in the *Agamemnon* a masterpiece of supreme artistic power. The majesty and glory of that unique play depend upon the perfect interpenetration of a still vivid spiritual faith with still ascendant poetry. The type attained completion, but awaited an artist who should round and temper it with more consummate grace and more of human charm. Sophocles, less profoundly interested in the religious idea than Æschylus, manipulates his subject-matter more deliberately as an artist. He stands aloof from the mythus without losing sight of its vivifying inner significance. But he begins to decompose the colossal mass which Æschylus, deriving this from predecessors, had moulded into so ponderous a fabric of architectural magnificence. By breaking up the trilogy, and by moralising the conception of theological Nemesis, Sophocles made tragedy at once more manageable and more humanly interesting. The type, in his hands, undergoes an important transformation, which prepares us to expect the next stage. With Euripides the disintegration of the type begins. He neglects the mythus, or uses it only for the exhibition of human nature currently observed by him, modelling character as realistically as the conditions imposed upon all playwrights by the Attic stage allowed. The theosophy of Æschylus, always implicit in Sophocles, survives as a mere conventionality in Euripides. His work might, in truth, be compared to the rhetorical performances of Fletcher in the Romantic style. Again, he concentrates his powers on single characters, single episodes, single motives, often of great beauty, but disconnected from the harmony of parts which the type, as still existing, demanded. His poverty of design, his lack of spiritual enthusiasm, his sceptical and

jaded mood of mind, were concealed beneath a mass of casuistical sophistries and stylistic elegances. These delighted the public of his day, who hailed as progress what was really the sublime commencement of the decadence.

Unfortunately, we are unable to carry the exposition further on sure ground. Yet what we can collect about the plays of Agathon and Chærêmon justifies us in believing that a kind of flamboyant brilliance and beauty was all that now survived of the great impassioned tragedy of the Athenians. The type had worked itself out. It never afterwards revived again, for the simple reason that its forces were exhausted, that every vein of gold in the mine had been excavated, that the noble vintage had been drunk to the lees, that what the germ could yield of vital structure was exhibited. Those who quarrel with Euripides, and who deplore the extravagances of Agathon and Chærêmon (poets beloved by Aristotle), have to face the fact—for this is what I am insisting on—that Agathon could not have taken up tragedy exactly where Euripides left it, any more than Euripides could have stayed at the same point as Sophocles, or than Sophocles could have refrained from refining upon Æschylus, or than Æschylus could have kept his art within the archaic limits of Phrynichus, or than Phrynichus and Thespis could have avoided emphasizing the dramatic element with which the Dionysiac choruses were pregnant. Each playwright, the representative no doubt of many who have perished, was a necessary link in the production of that totality which we call the Attic Drama. It is absurd to blame Thespis because he was uncouth, as to blame a stalk because it is stalky; as unscientific to condemn Chærêmon because he left nothing after him, as it is to condemn a husk because it is husky. Stalk and husk, leaf and flower and fruitage, are necessary to the plant in nature; and it is the business of criticism to recognise that an analogous necessity, rendering all parts significant, governs that more complex growth which the spirit

of a nation evolves in art, and which, unlike the grass of the field, has no power of self-reproduction.

Greek sculpture furnishes another illustration of this sequence, although the variety of schools which arose in different provinces of Hellas, and by their reciprocal influence upon the art prolonged its flourishing period, renders it a less perfect example than the Attic Drama. Nevertheless, when we consider the successive stages through which sculpture passed, from the austere, through the sublimely beautiful, to the simply elegant and the realistically striking, we shall concede that the same law is operative. The grave manner of the archaic sculptors, earnestly intent upon the expression of the mythus, culminates (for us at least) in the heroes of the Æginetan pediment. Pheidias represents the middle period of accomplished maturity. The subject selected for treatment by Pheidias is still penetrated with religious thought and feeling; but it is clear that the artist aims also at free æsthetical effect, exerting powers which have rarely been granted to any mortal, and expending unrivalled technical skill upon the revelation of elevated beauty. With Scopas and Praxiteles the type begins to soften. The former, if he be the author of the Niobids, displayed remarkable dramatic power, but a notable effeminacy of style; while the latter concentrated his attention mainly on the perfecting of single figures, exquisitely graceful—the Faun, the Erôs, the Hermes, the Aphrodite, the Apollo Sauroktonos, known to us partly in originals, but mostly through copies. In this third period a lack of true virility, a decay of serious intention, and a seeking after novel effects may be discerned; qualities which, in the succeeding age of the art, were replaced by realism, approximating to brutality in many instances. Powerful as were the sculptors of the school of Pergamus, we recognise that in them the representative Greek art had already abandoned the sphere of representative Greek virtues.

V.

From Rome we can expect no enforcement of the principle I am attempting to establish; for Roman art, whether literary or otherwise, was essentially a hybrid; and, as I may attempt in another place to demonstrate, hybrids do not obey the same laws of evolutionary progress as the specific art-growths of a single race and a continuous era. Yet all products of the Græco-Roman period have their own particular interest. In Poetry, the indigenous genius of the Latin race, as might have been expected, asserted itself with most effect; for poetry is the direct expression of character. Satire and didactic verse obtained a new and separate value. But the conditions under which the epic, the drama, and the lyric were cultivated rendered these species (as is almost invariably the case with literary hybrids) stationary. They served to exhibit the culture of refined students, to embody personal emotions, to express the sentiment of patriotism, and to preserve some traits of manners, without having in them evolutionary energy. In Sculpture, the Greek strain almost entirely dominated, so that the best statues of the age of Hadrian may be regarded as a kind of after-blossom which reminds us of the age of Alexander. The most characteristic works of Roman statuary are those bas-reliefs on columns, monumental effigies, and sepulchral portraits, in which the archaic Etruscan style survives. Roman architecture, lastly, although it displays no specifically Latin qualities, remains a genuine manifestation of the masterful imperial race. Roughly speaking, it consists of an amalgam of Etruscan and Greek elements; Etruria supplying the arch and the vault, which were unknown to Greece, Hellas yielding the superficial decoration of her orders, friezes, fluted columns, metopes, and other details of external structure. The Romans employed these twofold elements in a way peculiarly their own—with superb indifference to taste, but with the

colossal strength and barbaric fancy of Titan builders. Consequently, this hybrid exactly expresses the genius of the nation, itself composite, which succeeded in subduing the world. Without having essential elements of originality, it is original in its ideal and actual correspondence to the Roman domination ; and, in its later phase, in the age of Diocletian, it developed a new principle, which was destined to exercise wide influence over the future. This principle, to put it briefly, was the superposition of the arch to the column, a structural detail which determined Romanesque and Gothic architecture.

VI.

Roman art, for the reasons I have assigned, does not help us to establish the law of evolutionary progress. But it forms an important basis for the next instance, which furnishes, in my opinion, one of the most striking examples of what I have described as the parabola of art. Wherever Romans established themselves during the period of the Empire, they introduced one style of architecture, so that France, Germany, England, Spain, and of course Italy, possessed a common Romanesque style of building. After the absorption of Christianity by the Occidental races and the decay of the old Western Empire, this style was handled by the Teutonic tribes, who succeeded to the Latin heritage, upon practically the same lines of treatment. Local and national differences are of course powerfully manifested ; nor should these be neglected in the problem I am going to propound, for they render the phenomenon in question all the more remarkable. What I wish to insist upon is, that from this common material of Romanesque architecture there speedily emerged in all the sections of the sub-divided Western Empire one manner of building, with novel and distinctive attributes. This we are accustomed to call Gothic ; and the name, though derived from a false conception of ethnology, is useful in so far as it

reminds us of the fact that the style was one which peoples of Teutonic origin developed from the monuments of their old masters. It fixes attention on the corresponding fact that, although the Romans carried their architecture to Greece and Turkey, to Asia Minor and Palestine, to the North of Africa and Persia, no such novel growth as the Gothic type emerged from it there. This form, then, we have a right to regard as a product of the Teutonic mind, exhibited, with characteristic diversities, in all parts of Europe simultaneously. The distinctive features of the new style are the pointed arch and the adoption of piers instead of pillars. After the tentative beginnings of its earliest period, the finest examples of Gothic display a chaste and exquisitely graceful scheme of lancet windows, with restrained parsimony of ornamentation in the mouldings, bosses, pinnacles, crockets, and other subsidiary parts of architecture. This is what has sometimes been called the Early Pointed style. But it could not arrest itself at that pure and comparatively unambitious stage of development. It passed imperceptibly over into the Decorated style, where the windows were enlarged and filled with luxuriant tracery, and ornament was prodigally lavished upon every coign of vantage. From this stage it proceeded to what is known in England as the Perpendicular, and in France as the Flamboyant manner. Here the decadence was perceptible, for the manner of building began to contradict its own essential principles. The soaring arch flattened; the window usurped upon the wall; horizontal lines tended to dominate in the construction; structure, in many details, was sacrificed to effect; decoration, while it became more conventional, grew more abundant. Yet it is clear to those who study the history of Gothic architecture that this Perpendicular or Flamboyant style was no less a distinct evolution from the Decorated, elucidating factors which were implicit in the purer manner, than was Euripides a development from Sophocles. Nevertheless, the type could hardly advance further without

committing suicide; and consequently we find that Gothic dwindled into nothingness during those years which immediately preceded the Renaissance. It was not Palladio who dealt a death-blow to Gothic architecture. His pseudo-classical style, corresponding to the humanistic culture which overspread Europe from Italy in the sixteenth century, only served to fill a void already patent. The most remarkable point to notice about the progression of Gothic architecture is that it pursued the same course from inceptive energy to efflorescence and decay in all the countries of Europe simultaneously. We can trace similar and contemporaneously successive stages in France, England, Germany, Belgium, and Spain, underneath the local differences of each nation's monuments. And here it may be remarked, that the national characteristics of each district manifested themselves with greatest distinctness in the period which preceded the dissolution of the type. English Perpendicular, I mean, is more obviously separate from French Flamboyant than English Decorated from French Decorated; while the later town-halls of Belgium bring specific qualities to light, which are latent in Flemish buildings of an earlier stage. Italy alone, so far as Gothic is concerned, stands apart from the comity of European nations. The reason is obvious: Italy never submitted to Teutonic ascendency; and consequently, her Gothic monuments can hardly be regarded as more than exotic, albeit they present distinctive attributes.

VII.

I cannot forbear from adducing yet another instance, which seems to substantiate the position that a clearly marked type of national art, when left to pursue its course of development unchecked, passes through stages corresponding to the embryonic, the adolescent, the matured, the decadent, and the exhausted, in growths which we are accustomed to regard as physiological. This instance is that of Italian painting.

It started from the ruins of Byzantine and Romanesque art, displaying a strongly marked religious bias at the outset, and at the same time deriving much from a renascent interest in classical antiquity. Giotto and his school, who represent the first stage, were earnestly intent upon depicting sacred history and legends of the saints in comprehensive works of fresco on the walls of churches. They also undertook to set forth the political and philosophical ideas of their epoch; a fine example of this industry being the paintings in the Palazzo Pubblico at Siena. After this double task had been accomplished, and an inexhaustible repertory of pictorial motives had been provided for treatment by successive generations of masters, it was felt that the art of painting required development upon the technical side. Accordingly, a new race, following close upon the heels of their predecessors, gave attention to anatomy and perspective, to the various methods of tempera and oil, and to every detail which might heighten the illusion wrought by painting. These efforts culminated in the works of Fra Lippo Lippi, Perugino, Mantegna, Fra Bartolommeo, Botticelli, Signorelli, and the Bellini, in whom many critics discern the finest flower of the Italian plastic genius. During this second stage, the enthusiasm for antiquity, which had formed a motive force second only to religion from the outset, continued to expand with ever-increasing impetus, so that the artistic type displayed itself more and more as a wonderful double rose of Christianity and Paganism, exhaling twofold perfumes, and expressing the two diverse factors of the modern spirit. A third generation of painters, Lionardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michel Angelo, Correggio, Giorgione, Andrea del Sarto, brought the type thus elaborated to its fullest completion; and so rapid was the evolution of energy in Italian painting, that during the very lifetime of these men, and even in the later works of some of them, the inevitable decadence became perceptible. The masterpieces of this third period derive

their material indifferently from Christian and Pagan sources. In them both motive powers are utilised for a common artistic purpose; and a complete æsthetic harmony is effected for the apparently antagonistic elements which constituted the basis of modern European culture. Beyond that point it was hopeless to advance. The spheres of Christian belief and of Græco-Roman mythology, as these were then understood, had been ransacked; all salient subjects seized upon; all artistic problems within the limits of the type solved; every combination and permutation of the primitive series of numbers tried. Unless new ideas could be communicated to the nation in an instant (and this would have implied the genesis of a new type corresponding to them), Italian painting had nothing left but to pass away into hebetude. The passage to the fourth stage was wrought with singular celerity. Michel Angelo survived to see his country swarming with pretenders and mountebanks, who carried the specific qualities of himself and of his mighty compeers to absurdity, while they bedaubed palaces and churches with specious shapes which caught the eye, although they had no life-breath of the spirit in them. Yet the machines of the Mannerists and the Macchinisti, and the more strenuous labours of the Eclectics and the Naturalists, retain their value for students, since these demonstrate how impossible it is for industry and talent to revitalise a type of art which has fulfilled the curve of its existence. The curious point to notice about this decadence of Italian painting is that it imposed its own taste and fashion on Europe for well-nigh two centuries—until, indeed, fresh energies arose, which are conducting us, we hope, to some new avatar of art upon a different basis.

VIII.

It is hardly necessary to adduce further illustrations from the wide fields of ordinary culture. Every one can set to himself the problem of deciding how far Greek architecture,

Italian Romantic poetry, Mediæval painted glass, Italian sculpture, the saga of the Niblungs, the chivalrous epic centring in Arthur, and many other distinct species which might be mentioned, do or do not corroborate the views I have maintained.

It might be objected that nothing is gained in clearness of insight and precision of method by thus treating criticism from an evolutionary point of view, while dangerous analogies are suggested when we fall into the habit of regarding products of the human mind as subordinate to the same laws of development as living organisms. You prove nothing, it may be urged, by dwelling upon the stages in Greek sculpture, beyond the old familiar truth, that this art was closely connected with the religious and spiritual life of the Greek race. Its emasculation after the age of Pheidias was due to the relaxation of the national temper ; its realistic leanings at a later period are explained by the fact that tyrants instead of free states then became the patrons of art. I answer, that no one is more convinced than I am of the intimate connection between all art and the spirit of the race which has produced it, but that this does not invalidate the conclusions at which I have arrived. A type of art, once started, must, according to my view, fulfil itself, and bring to light the structure which its germ contained potentially. As this structure is progressively evolved, it becomes impossible to return upon the past. No individual man of genius in the age of Scopas could produce work of Pheidian quality, albeit his brain throbbed with the pulse of Marathonian patriotism. Originality has to be displayed by eliciting what is still left latent in the partially exhausted type. To create a new type, while the old one is existent, baffles human ingenuity, because the type is an expression of the people's mind, and has its roots deep down in the stuff of national character. Men cannot escape the influences of their age ; it is not their fault if they belong to the obscure period of origins or to the sorry

period of decadence. All have not the good fortune to be born in the prime and mature splendour of their nation's art. After meridian accomplishment, a progressive deterioration of the type becomes inevitable and cannot be arrested. Are we, for example, to suppose that in the age of Vasari and Bronzino at Florence there were not painters equal in artistic gifts to Ghirlandajo, Botticelli, Fra Bartolommeo? The supposition is absurd when we call to mind the profusion of such natures born in Florence during the fifteenth century. So far as capacity goes, there must have been abundance of good craftsmen. The reason why these did not manifest their genius on the same lines is that Painting had performed its curve, fulfilled its cycle, displayed its several aspects, effloresced, and been exhausted. In other words, there was no longer the old type to use. Is it credible that in England, after Davenant, there were not men of equal calibre with Webster and Beaumont? No; but such men could not produce Romantic dramas, because the Romantic Drama, as a type, had been accomplished. Their genius was compelled to seek other means of self-manifestation. Without the theory I am attempting to demonstrate, I do not see how we are to explain the fact that a nation like the English or the Greek at one very brief period of its existence, some fifty years perhaps, exhibits a marvellous fecundity of dramatic power, while before and afterwards, although the theatre continues, production of the same quality ceases. The reason why Italian Romantic poetry passed away in caricature and parody is, not that there was nobody in Italy capable of writing Romantic epics, and nobody who cared to read them, but that the thing itself, which had originated with the obscure street-singers of Roland, to which Boccaccio had contributed form, which Pulci and Boiardo had developed under two of its main aspects, which Ariosto had perfected, which Tasso had attempted to handle in a novel spirit, and from which Marino wrung the very last drops of life-sap, was

now a thing of the irrecoverable past. *It* was no longer there, although its manifestations survived in printed books.

I shall be met with another and not less formidable objection. Your theory, it will be said, does not account for the obvious fact that there are always architects, always sculptors, always painters, always poets, who produce excellent work. In the present age, for example, Europe lacks none of these artists, although you are unable to point out any phenomenon corresponding to what you would call a clearly marked type. This objection has indeed to be carefully weighed, and seems at first sight very difficult to answer. I must first be permitted to repeat words which I have already used while describing the sort of art-types to which I believe the laws of evolutionary development are applicable. I called them "in a true sense national, which have occupied the serious attention of whole peoples for considerable periods, and which are not the sporadic products of culture or of personal capacity." Now I would ask whether, at the present time, there is such a thing as national architecture in Europe? Have we anything corresponding to Greek or to Gothic building beyond more or less meritorious imitations? It is clear that such architecture as we have is a product of culture. I would ask the same questions with regard to sculpture and to painting, expecting the same answer. With regard to poetry and literature in general, excluding science from the latter species, I feel that the same questions could be asked and the same answer given. Therefore I reply that the arts in their present manifestation do not fulfil those conditions which I laid down as necessary to types obeying the laws of quasi-organic development. Music, it will be noticed, I have carefully refrained from mentioning at all.

In the next place, I submit that the arts of Europe, as they now exist, help to illustrate and confirm my theory. They are all of them hybrids, and what I pointed out with regard to Græco-Roman art is true of them. Ever since the

Renaissance there has been no pure and unmixed manifestation of national spirit in any art except Music. The problem for the Evolutionist increases continually in complexity by reason of crossings, blendings, and complicated heredity; by reason of our common European culture being adapted to divers national conditions; by reason of the rapid interchange of widely separated and specific products. I have, for instance, little doubt that the Novel could be analysed on evolutionary principles. But the Novel is one of the most "hybridisable genera" known to us in literature. When we reflect what Cervantes and Lesage taught English novelists, how much Fielding, Richardson, Sterne, Goldsmith, and Scott contributed to France, what influence Werther exerted for a time outside Germany, how the French producers of romances since the days of Balzac and George Sand have saturated the mind of Europe, what modifications we owe to the practice of American writers, and how the Slavonic peoples are now creating a new ideal for us of the realistic story, it will be admitted that I am justified in proclaiming the Novel to be no less certainly a "hybridisable genus" than the Orchis. It would take too much time to demonstrate, as I think it can be demonstrated, that when the arts have entered into conditions of existence which are favourable to hybridity, as in ancient Rome and modern Europe, they do not exhibit that series of phenomena which I have above described at one time under the metaphor of organic evolution, and at another under that of a parabolic curve. Personal capacity, the liberty of individual genius, the caprice of coteries, assert themselves with more apparent freedom in these circumstances. The type does not expire, because the type has become capable of infinite modification. It is indeed no longer a type in the special sense I have put upon that word, but a mongrel of many types. What art loses in force and impressiveness, in monumental dignity and power to embody the strong spirit of creative nations, it now

gains in elasticity and disengagement from the soil on which it springs.

IX.

We run a great risk when we attempt to break new ground in criticism: and I am conscious that the views I have expressed in this essay lie open to the charge of paradox. "With all your pains, you have only succeeded in discovering a mare's nest." "Instead of the pole-star you have been following some will-o'-the-wisp." Such are judgments which may be passed, and in the present state of knowledge may be fairly passed, upon the theory I have been expounding. And yet, when it comes to be investigated, I believe that any endeavour to bring criticism into vital accord with the leading conceptions of our age will be found to rest on firm foundations. "Creatures of a day; what is a man, and what is not a man?" cried Pindar, long ago. We have not advanced far beyond this proposition and this question. But our views about the world and man's place in it have so materially changed, that it is no longer possible to approach the study of human energy in any one of its great manifestations—religion, the state, art, philosophy—without adjusting this to the main current and keynote of thought. If we believe, as we are now constrained to believe, that all things in nature, including the sidereal systems, the multitudinous species of animals and plants upon our planet, and man himself, are products of an evolutionary process, we must logically apply the rules of that process to things which humanity—not this person or that person, but the collective personality of races first, and afterwards the larger collective personality of races in conjunction—has brought forth. The conception is not new. It has long been latent in the higher thought of Europe. In Hegel's magnificent attempt to organise the world ideally by gazing on the mirror of our mind, it clothed itself with specious splendour. I have

suggested that something fruitful for criticism as a branch of science may be adduced if we abandon the old paths of caprice and predilection, abandon the ambitious flight of ideal construction, and confine ourselves for this while to the investigation of points in which the evolution of the spirit seems to resemble the evolution of nature.

ON SOME PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM.

I.

WHILE tracing the decline of Italian art at the end of the Renaissance period, and its partial revival under the influences of the Catholic Reaction, I had occasion to write a chapter on the Bolognese school of painting. This brought before my mind the revolution to which taste is subject, and the apparent uncertainty of critical determinations. To what extent are there principles, I asked myself, by which men eager for the truth can arrive at a sound judgment in æsthetics, steering amid the shoals and billows of opinion? Or must we confess that literature and art are bound to remain the province of caprice and shifting fashion? With these doubts in my mind, I wrote the following paragraphs, which I will here resume, inasmuch as they may serve to introduce further discussion.

II.

In the history of criticism few things are more perplexing than the vicissitudes of taste, whereby the idols of past generations crumble suddenly to dust, while the despised and rejected are lifted to pinnacles of glory. Successive waves of æsthetical preference, following one another with curious rapidity, sweep the established fortresses of fame from their venerable basements, and raise aloft neglected monuments of genius which lay erewhile embedded in the quick-sands of oblivion.

During the last half-century taste has appeared to be more capricious, revolutionary, and anarchical than at any previous epoch. The unity of orthodox opinion has broken up. Critics have sought to display originality by depreciating names famous in former ages, and by exalting minor stars to the rank of luminaries of the first magnitude. A man, yet in middle life, can remember with what reverence engravings after Raphael, the Caracci, and the Poussins were treated in his boyhood ; how Fra Angelico and Perugino ruled at a somewhat later period ; how one set of eloquent writers discovered Blake, another Botticelli, and a third Carpaccio ; how Signorelli and Bellini and Mantegna and Luini received tardy recognition ; and now, of late years, how Tiepolo has bidden fair to obtain the European *grido.*

He will also bear in mind that the conditions under which his own æsthetical development has taken place—studies in the Elgin marbles, the application of photography to works of art, the publications of the Arundel Society in London, the encyclopædic and comparative collections of German archæologists—explain and to some extent justify what looks like caprice and chaos in æsthetic fashion. Our generation has been engaged in cataloguing, classifying, and rearranging the museums of the past. We need not be astonished then if the palace of art is in some confusion at the present moment. Despite such seeming confusion, a student who has been careful to addict himself to no one school and to no master, is aware that after thirty years of intelligent curiosity he stands on larger and surer ground than his predecessors.

Criticism and popular intelligence, meanwhile, are unanimous upon two points : first, in manifesting an earnest determination to distinguish what is essentially good and true in art from what is only specious, without attributing too much weight to established reputations or to the traditions of orthodox authority ; secondly, in an enthusiastic effort to

appreciate and exhibit what is sincere and beautiful in works to which our forefathers were obtuse and irresponsive. A wholesome reaction, in one word, has taken place against academical dogmatism; the study of art has been based upon sounder historical and comparative methods; taste has become appreciably more catholic, open-minded, and unprejudiced.

The seeming confusion of the last half-century ought not, therefore, to shake our confidence in the possibility of arriving at stable laws of criticism. Radical revolutions, however salutary, cannot be effected without some injustice to the ideals of the past and without some ill-founded enthusiasm for ideals of the moment. Nor can so wide a region as that of European art be explored except by divers pioneers, each biassed by personal predilections and sensibilities, each liable to paradoxes of peculiar opinion under the excitement of discovery, each followed by a coterie of disciples sworn to support their master's utterances.

In order to profit by the vast extension of artistic knowledge in this generation, and to avoid the narrowness of sects and cliques, the main thing for us is to form a clear conception of the mental atmosphere in which sound criticism has to live and move and have its being. "The form of this world passes; and I would fain occupy myself with that only which constitutes abiding relations." So said Goethe; and these words have much the same effect as that admonition of his, "to live with steady purpose in the Whole, the Good, the Beautiful." The true critic must divest his mind from what is transient and ephemeral, must fasten upon abiding relations, *bleibende Verhältnisse*. He notes that one age is classical, another romantic; that this generation swears by the Caracci, that by Giotto. Meanwhile he resolves to maintain the truth that classics and romantics, the Caracci and Giotto, are alike worthy of regard only in so far as they exemplify the qualities which bring art into the sphere of

abiding relations. One eminent rhetorician is eloquent for Fra Angelico, another for Rubens; the former has personal sympathy for the Fiesolan monk, the latter for the Flemish courtier. Our true critic divests himself of idiosyncratic whims and partialities, striving to enter with firm purpose into the understanding of universal goodness and beauty. In so far as the works of Fra Angelico and Rubens are good and beautiful, he will be appreciative of them both, without feeling that the one excludes the other.

Aristotle laid it down as an axiom that the ultimate verdict in matters of taste is "what the wise man would decide." The critic may become a wise man, a man of enlightened intelligence, *φρονίμος*, by following the line of Goethe's precepts. The uncertainties of private judgment will never be wholly eliminated from criticism. But these will be diminished by the concentration of our minds upon the whole, upon abiding relations.

In working out self-culture and attaining to a feeling for the whole, the critic may derive assistance from the commanding philosophical conception of our century. All things with which we are acquainted are in evolutionary process. Everything belonging to human nature is in a state of organic transition, passing through necessary stages of birth, growth, decline, and death. Art, in any one of its grand manifestations, avoids this law of organic evolution, arrests development at the fairest season of growth, arrests the decadence which ends in death, no more than does an oak. The oak, starting from an acorn, nourished by earth, air, light, and water, offers indeed a simpler problem than so complex an organism as, say Italian painting, developed under conditions of manifold social and pyschological diversity. Yet the dominant law controls both equally.[1]

It is not, however, in evolution that we must look to find

[1] This theory has been worked out most fully in the preceding essay.

the abiding relations spoken of by Goethe. The evolutionary conception does not supply those to students of art, though it unfolds a law which is of permanent and universal application. It forces us to dwell on inevitable conditions of mutability and transformation. It leads the critic to comprehend what is meant by the whole. It encourages the habit of scientific toleration and submission. By it we are saved from uselessly fretting ourselves because of the unavoidable; from mourning over the decline of Pointed architecture into Perpendicular aridity and Flamboyant feebleness, over the passage of the sceptre from Sophocles to Euripides or from Tasso to Marino, over the chaos of mannerism and eclecticism into which Italian painting plunged from the height of its maturity. Our toleration and acceptance of inevitable change need not involve the loss of discriminative perception. We can apply the evolutionary canon in all strictness without ignoring that adult manhood is preferable to senile decrepitude, that Pheidias surpasses the sculptors of Pergamos, that one Madonna of Gian Bellini is more valuable than all the pictures of the younger Palma, and that Dosso Dossi's portrait of the Ferrarese jester is better worth having than the whole of Annibale Caracci's Galleria Farnesina. It will even lead us to select for models and for objects of special study those works which bear the mark of adolescence or of vigorous maturity, as being more perfectly characteristic of the type and more important for an understanding of its specific qualities.

Nevertheless, not in evolution, but in man's soul—his intellectual and moral nature—must be sought those abiding relations which constitute great art, and are the test of right æsthetic judgment. These are such as truth, simplicity, sobriety, love, grace, patience, modesty, repose, health, vigour, brain-stuff, dignity of thought, imagination, lucidity of vision, purity and depth of feeling. Wherever the critic finds these —whether it be in Giotto at the dawn or in Guido at the

nightfall of Italian painting, in Homer or Theocritus at the two extremes of Greek poetry—he will recognise the work as ranking with those things from which the soul draws nourishment.

The claims of craftsmanship on his attention are not so paramount. It is possible to do great work in art through many different styles, and with very various technical equipments. The critic, for example, must be able to see excellence both in the frigidly faultless draughtsmanship of Ingres and in the wayward anatomy of William Blake. At the same time, craftsmanship is not to be neglected. Each art has its own vehicle of expression, and exacts some innate or acquired capacity for the use of that vehicle from the artist. The critic must therefore be sufficiently versed in technicalities to give them their due value. It can, however, be laid down, as a general rule, that while immature or awkward workmanship is compatible with æsthetic achievement, technical dexterity, however skilfully applied, has never done anything for a soulless artist.

Criticism, in the last place, implies judgment; and that judgment must be adjusted to the special nature of the thing criticised. Art differs from ethics, from the material world, from sensuality however refined. It will not, therefore, in the long run do for the critic of art to apply the same rules as the moralist, the naturalist, or the hedonist. It will not do for him to be contented with edification, or differentiation of species, or demonstrable delightfulness, as the scope and end of his analysis. All art is a presentation of the inner human being, his thought and feeling, through the medium of beautiful symbols in words, form, colour, and sound. Our verdict must consequently be determined by the amount of thought, the amount of feeling, proper to noble humanity, which we find adequately expressed in beautiful æsthetic symbols. And the man who shall pronounce this verdict is, now as in the days of Aristotle, the wise man, the man of

enlightened intelligence, the judicious man, the man of just and liberal perceptions, sound in his own nature, and open to ideas. Even his verdict will not be final; for no one is wholly free from partialities, due to the age in which he lives and to the qualities of his specific temperament. Still, a consensus of such verdicts eventually forms that voice of the people which, according to an old proverb, is the voice of God. Slowly, and after many processes of sifting, the cumulative voice of the wise men, the *φρονίμοι*, decides. Insurgents against their judgment—in the case for example of acknowledged masters like Michel Angelo, Shakespeare, Mozart—are doomed to ultimate defeat, because this judgment is really based upon abiding relations, upon truths for human nature which have been expressed in art.

Our hope for the future with regard to unity of taste is then: that, academical and sentimental seekings after a fixed ideal having been abandoned, and transient theories founded upon idiosyncratic or temporary partialities having been exploded, the scientific spirit shall make men more and more capable of living resolutely in the whole, more and more conscious of permanent relations. In proportion as we gain a truer conception of our own place in the world, in proportion as we refuse to accept anything which is not positive and solid, we shall come to comprehend with more instinctive certitude what is simple, natural, truthful, honest, and shall welcome all artistic products in so far as they exhibit these qualities. The perception of the enlightened man will then be the taste of a mentally healthy and impartial person, who has made himself acquainted with the laws of evolution in art and in society, and who is able to test the excellence of work in any stage from immaturity to decadence by discerning what there is of sincerity and natural vigour in it.

III.

Thus far I wrote three years ago upon this topic, seeking to define the critic's mental attitude toward his task.

Resuming the same subject from a somewhat different point of view, it will be well to inquire first what we mean by criticism.

The term critic (*ὁ κριτικός* and *criticus*) is classical both in Greek and Latin literature. According to its derivation, it means one who is competent to be a judge, the judges in poetic contests at Athens having been called *κριτάι*. The notion of judgment lies therefore at the root of criticism; and the critic is a man who pronounces judgment upon the work of others.

This sense of the word was accepted without question until recently. The critic claimed to rank as umpire, trained by special studies for pronouncing on the merits of authors and of artists. He supported his decision by appeal to precedents, established canons, accepted definitions. Some difference of opinion existed as to the validity of certain rules; but no one doubted that the critic was a judge, or that it was his function to apply rules. As in jurisprudence law is made by the decision of judges, so in criticism the code of taste was formed by the dicta of eminent experts.

To this primary conception of criticism, a second has been recently opposed. It is contended that the critic should resign his pretensions to the judicial ermine. He must drop the ferule of the archididascalus, and assume the humbler pointing-rod of the showman. It is not his function to pronounce from the bench on what is right or wrong, to acquit or to condemn, to apply canons and extend the province of orthodox taste by enforcing laws. On the contrary, he ought to be content with studying and displaying the qualities of things submitted to his intellect and senses. He must unfold the "virtues" of the works of art with which he has been

occupied. He must classify and describe them, as a botanist the plants with which he has to do. In a certain sense, he may also take rank among creators by reproducing the masterpieces of poet or of painter with engaging rhetoric, or by eloquently exhibiting his own sensibilities in animated prose.

Thus we have already two distinct conceptions of the critic—as judge and as showman. These depend on radical and fundamental points of difference in our interpretation of the term. They are harmonised, to some extent, in a third and still more modern conception. According to this, the critic is neither a mere judge nor a mere showman. He must become the natural historian of art and literature, must study each object in relation to its antecedents and its consequents, must make himself acquainted with the conditions under which the artist grew, the habits of his race, the opinions of his age, his physical and psychological peculiarities. Only after having conscientiously pursued this method, may he proceed to deliver judgments; and these will invariably be qualified by his sense of relativity in art and literature.

We have now three conceptions of the critic—as judge, as showman, and as scientific analyst. The first corresponds to what may be termed classical criticism. It prevailed in modern Europe till the close of the last century. The revolutionary spirit of that epoch called the magisterial authority of classical criticism in question, and introduced the second of the three conceptions, which corresponds to what may be termed romantic criticism. Meanwhile, the rapid advance of science led to the third conception, which takes for granted that the arts are capable of being historically studied in their evolution.

Classical criticism rested upon a logical basis. It assumed the existence of certain fixed principles, from which correct judgments might be deduced. Romantic criticism substituted sympathies and antipathies for rules, and exchanged authority

for personal opinion. Scientific criticism proceeds by induction, historical investigation, morphological analysis, misdoubting the certainty of æsthetic principles, regarding the instincts and sensibilities of the individual with distrust, seeking materials for basing the canons of perfection upon some positive foundation.

According to etymology, the fundamental function of criticism is judgment; and during the classical period no doubt was cast upon the critic's right to judge. In the romantic period this function was disputed, and the rules by which a verdict could be pronounced were opened to discussion. In scientific criticism the idea returns to itself again, but on an altered basis. The critic arrives at conclusions after preparatory studies in history, psychology, scholarship, by means of which he hopes to ground his judgment on sufficient demonstration.

In each of the three stages which I have indicated, judgment is undoubtedly implied. The classical critic judged by principles, and by the decisions of his predecessors—by Aristotle, Longinus, Horace, Aristarchus, Boileau. The romantic critic judged by his own preferences and proclivities —like the Semiramis of Dante—

Che libito fe lecito in sua legge.

The scientific critic judges, but does not do so without understanding the natural and historical conditions of the product under examination, and without making the allowances demanded by his sense of relativity. For example, he will not, like the classical critic, pronounce the "Divine Comedy" to be "une amplification stupidement barbare," because he has no sympathy with the Middle Ages, and because this poem cannot be made to square with the orthodox canon of the epic. He will not, like the romantic critic, exalt the "Song of Roland" while he decries the "Gerusalemme Liberata," because he is enthusiastic for semi-barbarous

sublimity and feels a prejudice against the monuments of artificial art. In these three cases he applies himself to explaining why the "Divine Comedy," the "Song of Roland," and the "Gerusalemme Liberata" took certain and specific forms, and how each work of art in question was related to its age. Afterwards, he is at liberty to pronounce opinions as to the success with which the forms have been evolved, and to show reason why one or the other of them, according to his judgment, ought to be regarded as the nobler kind of art.

IV.

The three types of criticism which I have called classical, romantic, and scientific—the three sorts of critics, described by me as judges, showmen, natural historians—co-exist, and have, to some extent, always co-existed, although it is correct to view them as representing successive stages in time. The true critic must combine all three types in himself, and hold the balance by his sense of their reciprocal relations. He cannot abnegate the right to judge; he cannot divest himself of subjective tastes which colour his judgment; but it is his supreme duty to train his faculty of judgment and to temper his subjectivity by the study of things in their historical connections.

Heraclitus has a weighty saying, which those who aim at sound criticism should bear in mind.[1] "It behoves us," he remarks, "to follow the common reason of the world; yet, though there is a common reason in the world, the majority live as though they possessed a wisdom peculiar each unto himself alone."

[1] This fragment of Heraclitus is reported by Sextus Empiricus. The λόγος ξυνὸς of the original, which is opposed to ἰδία φρόνησις, must probably be taken in connection with the philosopher's theory of a pantheistic spirit, in which alone is truth, and in the participation with which alone is human wisdom. My application of the sentence is therefore to some extent derivative. See Bywater's "Heracliti Ephesii Reliquiæ," p. 38, for the Greek text.

The object of education is to provide us in youth with a sense of this common reason—a just if general view of what mankind as a whole is—a notion of what has been thought and wrought by our race in its totality, of what humanity at its best and strongest has achieved by interrupted yet continuous effort, of how we come to be what we are and to think and feel as we do. Humanism, the study of history and literature and art and law, suffices better than any other training for this needful propædeutic. It is superior to the study of mathematical and natural science, because its matter is of greater moral and mental importance to humanity; while, as a discipline, it is not inferior if rigorously conducted upon systematic method. Such education prepares the specialist to judge with width of sympathy and due regard for relations, to overcome personal caprice and predilection, and to survey the particular plot he selects for exploration as part of one great whole.

It may be added that liberal culture of the sort described goes far towards emancipating men from the vanity which aims at originality in and out of season. In their desire to be original, or to appear original, critics too often forget the paramount necessity of being true. It is better to repeat old things, if they are true, than to improvise new things, if they are not true. A man who thinks that he has caught some novel glimpse upon a well-worn subject, is tempted to distort the truth in his eagerness to do the discovery full justice. This leads to paradox; and paradox, though bolstered up with epigram, has no prospect of survival except through the grain of truth which may be contained in it.

There is a difficulty here for the critic, who must always to some extent appear as the law-giver or law-expounder. From time to time he will find himself, through his own sincerity, in the position of an innovator, and may expect to be classified with the paradox-mongers. In these circumstances, it must suffice for him to see whether he has sincerely tested his

particular wisdom (ἰδία φρόνησις) by what he can perceive of universal wisdom (κοινὴ φρόνησις)—whether, in fact, the views he promulgates seem to him concordant with the tenor of the best thought of the age in which he lives, and with the lessons of the past which he has tried to appropriate. Then let him take courage and deliver his opinions to the world with such reserve and courtesy as he commands—with the expectation, too, of having them severely tried, and being sent himself to school again to study fresh conclusions, and to finger strenuously for the fiftieth time some Gordian knot.

Criticism, in brief, requires of a man the combined qualities of Conservatism and Radicalism, of patience and audacity, of humility and self-confidence, of severe respect for the past, and of an honest desire to forecast the future. In so far as he sincerely attempts to live in the whole, and to submit his personal perceptions to the test of what he can perceive of the world-current, the critic may fail through inadequacy of powers, but he shall not be liable to the reproach of vanity or the condemnation passed on wordy rhetoricians.

V.

Is there then a prospect, it may be asked, of criticism becoming a science? The answer to this question depends on what we mean by science. It is clear that any branch of knowledge which has to do with creations of the human mind cannot be classed with the exact or mathematical sciences. It is also clear that criticism, implying as it does judgment, cannot be classed with such a science as geology, which does not pretend to judge, but catalogues, maps out, and attempts to trace the evolution of the material substances composing the earth's crust. Still it might, perhaps, be expected that criticism should become a science in the same sense as that in which we call Ethics and Political Economy sciences; that is to say, a department of systematised and co-ordinated knowledge. From this point of view one of its branches

would be the classification and history of all mental products in the past; another, the determination of definitions and canons whereby such products should be estimated.

No sooner have we stated these conditions than it becomes apparent that too distinct a field is being claimed for criticism, and that we are wandering from the proper meaning of the word. Criticism is not of the same nature as science. It is not a department of systematised knowledge, but an instrument or organ ancillary to all sciences and to every branch of investigation which implies the exercise of judgment.

After admitting that criticism (as it is at present understood) cannot enter the sphere of the sciences, we may still pause to consider how far it can be exercised in a scientific spirit, with a defined method, with principles established rationally and applied logically. In pursuing this inquiry, it will be convenient to limit attention to the criticism of art and literature, which is the main subject of the present essay; although, as I have said, the critical faculty finds exercise in every province of thought, and its operation in each is determined by the same conditions of psychology and logic.

VI.

Criticism, in order to be methodical, implies a previous metaphysic. The critic must possess views regarding art in general, and the functions of the several arts. He ought also to have formed conceptions of what is meant by the abstract terms he uses. For the most part, in this country, the practice of the critic is empirical, and notions common to the vulgar are accepted at their current value. In Germany, on the other hand, we have eminent examples, from Kant to Hegel, from Kuno Fischer and Schopenhauer to Lotze, of rigorous attempts to deduce the laws of criticism from abstract metaphysic. The two systems differ less than they appear to do; for whether general notions are empirically borrowed or logically demonstrated, notions of some sort underlie all

judgments, and the real acumen of the critic is displayed in his application of them to particulars rather than in his philosophical ingenuity.

It furthermore implies a previous study of history. The critic should be familiar with the main literatures and art-epochs of the past. This, in fact, is more important than the metaphysical groundwork of criticism, and is consistent with the leading philosophical impulse of our age. For a time at least we have abandoned *a priori* and deductive methods for the study of natural development, and for the inductive accumulation of facts which shall enable us to understand phenomena.

It implies a certain amount of technical skill. In order to pronounce opinions upon music, the critic must possess some knowledge of harmony and some command of an instrument. The critic of poetry must understand the prosody of quantity and accent. The critic of sculpture and painting ought to be at least to some extent a draughtsman and a colourist. The critic of architecture should have studied the mathematics of proportion and the mechanical laws of structure.

Nevertheless, the critic need not be a professed metaphysician, a recognised historian, a practical artist, or an acknowledged poet. Poets, artists, historians, and metaphysicians may indeed be excellent critics, but not by reason of their special faculty in those departments. The critic is separate from the specialist in any line of art or literature or philosophy ; and nothing is more false than the assumption that specialists should only be judged by specialists. The critic represents and instructs that vast majority of intelligent beings for whom the specialists produce their several works. He has to apply the faculty of sense and judgment which belongs to all liberal natures, but which he has trained beyond the ordinary degree of subtlety and precision by the exercise of sensibility and the acquisition of exact knowledge. It is the critic's function to act as interpreter and balance-holder,

to lead and enlighten the common intelligence which forms the final court of appeal in matters of taste, to shape and express the judgments of the φρονίμοι or men of sober wisdom. How difficult his duty is, and how ill it is performed for the most part, none knows better than one who has attempted to discharge it in a sincere and modest spirit. Common sense, sagacity, justice of perception, openness to ideas, susceptibility to beauty, sufficient information, the power of weighing evidence and estimating the worth of testimony: these qualities constitute the critic, and whoever possesses and exercises them is a critic, whatever else he may be.

When judging or pronouncing an opinion, he has to consider both the matter and the form of that which is presented to his mind—what the work of art contains, and how it is put forth. Since then all art expresses what the artist has perceived, thought, and felt concerning external nature, mankind, and himself—the world, human life, and his own being—the critic asks: How far in this case is perception just, accurate, penetrative, subtle? How far is the representation of life and nature adequate to fact? To what extent is the product in harmony with the best thought, the noblest emotions, the worthiest sentiments of our race? What kind of individuality is indicated in the work? Does the artist show himself to be a man of normal or abnormal temperament? By right of what particular quality, moral, intellectual, and sensuous, does he claim attention? In what relation does he stand to the permanent facts of human nature? How is he related to the spirit of his age and nation; and what has he contributed to the sum of culture? The substance or content of a work of art being inseparable from its form, the critic connects these questions with a parallel series of interrogations regarding the artist's style, his command of the particular vehicle adopted for expression, his attitude toward the art of his own century, and the genius of the nation to which he belongs. When we speak of critical judgment, we

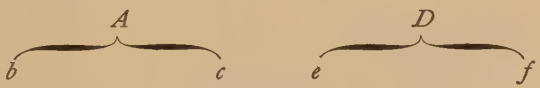
assume that a double process of inquiry upon these lines has consciously or unconsciously been gone through by the critic. His final utterance or verdict is a summing up of the impressions made upon him by the work subjected to his sensibility and analytic reason. His experience of life, his susceptibility to beauty, his knowledge of history, his insight into character, his powers of observation, his technical acquirements, are brought into play at every moment by the work of art before him, just as the same faculties were exercised by the artist while producing that work, which is the sign and symbol of the impressions made upon him by the aspects of nature, the tragedy or comedy of human life, and the drama of his own inner experience. The artist presents a view of the world and man gained at first hand from the object. The critic repeats a view of the world and man at second hand with the work of art as object. The artist does not reason or explain. The critic states or implies reasons for his opinion ; and it is this difference between the creative and the critical act which imports into the latter an obvious exercise of the judicial faculty. Art itself implies judgment. By his selection of subjects and manner of treatment, the artist betrays a voluntary or involuntary preference, which constitutes his judgment on the things he represents. But the critic, having not merely to clothe impressions in form, but to give an account of them, and if possible to explain his opinion persuasively to the intelligence of the world, brings the act of judgment, which is logically involved in every mental operation, more prominently and deliberately forward.

VII.

In criticism there is an unavoidable subjective element, which will always prevent it from being in the exact sense scientific. Products of the human mind are not to be classified in the same way as products of nature. It is doubtful whether the history of arts and literatures will ever be placed

upon the same footing as geology and botany. Far less have we the right to expect that the criticism (as distinguished from the history) of literary and artistic work will be governed by a method independent of the critic's personality.

In criticism the mind of one individual, qualified by certain idiosyncratic properties, and further qualified by the conditions of his race and age, is brought to bear upon the product of another human mind, itself qualified by certain idiosyncratic properties and further qualified by the conditions of a certain race and century. In this way a quadruple element of subjectivity enters into the final estimate, as will appear from the following diagram:



Here *A* stands for the artist, *b* for his temperament, *c* for what we will call his milieu. *D* stands for the critic, *e* for his temperament, *f* for his milieu. Thus the relation between *A* and *D*, the artist and the critic, involves a blending of *b*, *c*, *e*, *f*, so uncertain in its combinations as to preclude scientific exactitude in the estimate formed by the latter. Moral, political, religious, æsthetic, sensuous sympathies and antipathies play their inevitable part, preventing the intellect of the critic from fully attaining to that quality of dry light which should be the object of his earnest effort. For like reasons, no two critics will ever be able to take precisely the same view of any one object of art.

Owing to this intrusion of subjectivity, one of the prime difficulties of criticism is correct interpretation. How well-nigh impossible it is to be quite sure that we have caught the meaning, felt the tone of an ancient author! The criticism of the Bible, the criticism of Aristotle, and Plato, and Homer, have suffered and are suffering from defective interpretation to an extent of which the world is only tardily becoming conscious. If we consider Calvin's interpretation

of S. Paul and Gladstone's views on Homer, what I mean by the blending of quadruple subjectivity will be glaringly apparent.

Criticism, in the modern sense of the word, began with the humanistic movement of the early Renaissance. Those first Italian scholars who collected Greek and Latin MSS. approached the literature of antiquity with insufficient feeling for its historical development. They regarded that vast mass of documents, extending over about one thousand years, as a totality, without perspective and without a just discrimination of successive periods. They assumed, for instance, that the poem of Hero and Leander, because it bore the name of Musæus, was the very earliest instead of being, as it is, one of the very latest products of Hellenic genius. They interpreted the genuine dialogues of Plato by the light of Proclus and Plotinus. They confounded the writings of Aristotle with the traditions of his school and with the glosses of Arabian commentators. In that first period of scholarship there was little or no sense for the relative value of evidence, no inquiry into the authority of witnesses. Latin and Græco-Roman writers, Cicero and Plutarch, were accepted as conclusive with regard to well-nigh prehistoric stages in the political history of Sparta. The verses of an Alexandrian poet were studied side by side with genuine fragments of Anacreon, as though both formed the relics of one author. The epitomes of Diogenes Laertius, the biographies published by Neoplatonic mystics, were regarded as authoritative on the opinions of Pythagoras and Plato, Democritus and Heraclitus. In the field of plastic art a similar want of discrimination prevailed. Every statue of antiquity, whether proceeding from the authentic chisel of Pheidias or from the workshop of a craftsman in the age of Hadrian, appeared to have an equal value. Originals and copies were alike the objects of unquestioning veneration.

Thanks to the profound enthusiasm awakened by the

revival of learning in the fifteenth century, thanks also to the fact that humanism now began to form the staple of European culture, this stage of omnivorous acceptance and encyclopædic absorption merged into one of patient and minute investigation. The microscope was applied to classical literature ; its fragmentary state became apparent ; the many centuries from Homer to Ausonius were reckoned ; close study of style revealed much that was spurious, counterfeit, of base alloy and of trifling evidential value in hitherto revered authorities. The detailed examination of MSS. required by editors of Greek and Latin authors proved an excellent school in criticism. So did the controversies which raged around the rival merits of Homer and Virgil as epic poets, of Plato and Aristotle as philosophers. Penetrating further into the spirit of the past, students began to perceive in what respects the thinkers of the classic age differed from themselves, and in what points humanity remained unaltered. This comparison of a recovered civilisation with the civilisation of the sixteenth century, this shock of the Christian with the Pagan mind, stimulated curiosity and encouraged a keenly sceptical habit of investigation. Valla's exposure of the false Decretals and the Donation of Constantine, and his demonstration that the epistle of Abgarus was palpably spurious, marked an epoch in the annals of destructive criticism. Then came the movement of the Reformation in Germany, and the movement of the New Philosophy in Southern Italy, breaking down at one and the same time the authority of ecclesiastical and of Aristotelian tradition, and forcing men to regard documents, superstitiously accounted sacred, in the light of common sense.

Thus criticism, as we understand it, emerged ; and one of the main benefits derived from the Revival of Learning is the excitation of a sound instinct regarding its method. If we owed nothing else to humanism, this alone should reconcile us with the Renaissance ; for science itself may be said to

have sprung into existence from habits of exact research aroused by the scrupulous examination and comparison of antique records.

The chief danger of criticism in its present stage is not that patient and exhaustive investigation should be spared, but that the critic should be insufficiently upon his guard against subjective fancies, paradoxes of opinion, and super-subtleties of ingenuity. Science suffers less from this peril, though, even in science, the plausible hypotheses of brilliant thinkers may be mistaken for demonstrations. The history of Darwinism after the publication of the "Origin of Species," in 1859, furnishes a very interesting example of criticism applied for a series of years to a theory which startled the world, and won its way by slow degrees under the test of strict and hostile examination. Literature and art are peculiarly liable, owing to their subject-matter, to distortion and misrepresentation at the hands of historians and critics. It behoves us, therefore, to be specially upon our guard against the importation of our own thoughts and feelings into the works we have to deal with, and to be mindful that our subjectivity is a perpetual source of danger.

It is something to have gained a clear conception of the critical method. It is even more to have become aware of its limitations. To this extent, then, through the perception of what criticism ought to be, through the definition of its province, and through the recognition of what is inevitably imperfect in its instrument, the method tends to being in its own way scientific. Each year adds to our systematic knowledge of arts and literatures; and with each extension of that knowledge the body of undisputed facts, the sum of accepted opinions, are enlarged. It might almost be maintained that we are slowly advancing towards a period at which criticism will become deductive through the accumulation of principles and their verification by the comparative method of study applied to arts and letters.

VIII.

At this point it is not unnatural to ask what are the relations between criticism and erudition. What is the real value of laborious learning—bibliographical, historical, philological, etc.—for the higher culture ?

The critic, if he has a right conception of his task, will regard no knowledge, however formal, no information, however slight and seemingly irrelevant, as unimportant for his purpose.

It was from technical inquiries into the redaction of the Gospels, the composition of the Pentateuch, the authorship of the Psalms, the probable antiquity of the Book of Job, the dramatic character of the Song of Solomon, the integrant parts of Isaiah, the canon of S. Paul's epistles, the political allusions in the Apocalypse, that sound views on the subject of inspiration and the character in general of our sacred writings gradually filtered into Biblical criticism.

We had not learned to know Shakespeare before we attempted to disentangle his part in *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen;* before we tried to eliminate what does not belong to him from *Henry VIII.;* before we entertained the question of touchings and rehandlings necessitated by his double craft of theatre-proprietor and playwright. Not an atom of dry-as-dust learning, derived from the microscopical collation of texts, from anxious scrutiny of deeds and records, from tedious bibliographical and chronological researches, goes for naught in our intelligence of Shakespeare.

Each rill of minute investigation swells the main current of criticism. Each limitation of the subject under consideration acts like a useful dam against the irruption of conceit and fancy in the critic. The more he knows of fact, the less can he expatiate in regions of conjecture.

Take a minor instance. Suppose we are about to deal with Sidney's "Astrophel and Stella." Have we here a key

to unlock Sidney's heart? Are those enigmatical poems, the first love-poems composed in England on a complicated autobiographical theme, to be accepted (as they seem to be intended) for the diary of Sidney's feelings? Can they be explained by what is known of the chronology of his brief manhood? What light is thrown upon them from the threnodies with which his death was greeted, and the numerous allusions to his name dispersed through all the writings of that period? To what extent must allowance be made for the Italian influences under which the courtier-poet, the travelled scholar, the morning star of the renascence in our island, penned them? Are they in fact the serious record of real life-experience, or the sport of Platonising fancy in a studied form of art, or something intermediate, to which both man of heart and man of letters gave their quota?

The answers to these questions, if any satisfactory answers can be given, are only to be arrived at after a comparison of dates, a study of collateral documentary evidence, a careful examination of the allusions to facts and incidents embedded in the poems, and a detailed analysis of the earliest printed editions of the book with special reference to the order of the several pieces. It is only by following such a method that the critic will venture to decide how the sonnets and songs which constitute the body of the work should be arranged, and whether Stella (the Lady Penelope Devereux) was a married woman when Sidney wrote them. A special familiarity with the Italian models then in vogue may help him to form an opinion as to the imaginative nature of these lyrics. With this end in view, he studies the types under which that conventional style of utterance presented itself to Elizabethan Englishmen, and carefully notes the differences of tone and accent between Tasso and Bembo on the one hand, and Sidney and Shakespeare on the other.

After such preliminary labours, true critics will often best display their quality of wisdom by abandoning the problem

as insoluble. They will be content to state its conditions as fairly and as comprehensively as possible, leaving their readers to draw conclusions, and modestly suggesting the path on which they have themselves been led. Indeed, it is just here that the critic has to protect himself most warily against his own subjective ingenuity. To construct a plausible scheme of explanation, to fence it round with pyschological hypotheses, to emphasize the points of evidence which give colour to the view adopted, to attenuate conflicting testimony, is cheap and easy enough. This is what minds of the second order in criticism, with whom erudition and the theory weigh more than an imperious anxiety to prove the truth, delight in doing. But the test of a good critic is suspension of judgment in cases which are not convincingly proven.

Take the more important instance of Shakespeare's sonnets. We have all tried to wring the heart out of that mystery. We have all felt the accent of acute passion alternating with the accent of what looks like artificial compliment—the inequality of style, the inequality of emotion, the inequality of artistic handling—in those unparalleled outpourings of a mighty poet's soul. We do not doubt their genuineness. We trace the outlines of a story in them, which it is not difficult to decipher, although the import may be painful. So far we are agreed. But when it comes to deciding whether Shakespeare intended a merely dramatic series of psychological lyrics, or whether he committed his own experience from day to day to paper in the sonnets, or whether he wrote them for a friend—who Mr. W. H. was, and who the dark lady was—then at once we differ. As it seems to me, this is the point at which sound criticism diverges from criticism over-weighted with erudition or with subjective prepossession. Queen Elizabeth, Lord Southampton, Lord Pembroke, William Hughes,[1] William Him-

[1] William Hughes had been in literary existence a century before Mr. Oscar Wilde resuscitated this hypothetical youth in a magazine of 1889.

self, have successively posed, in the schemes of constructive critics, for Mr. W. H. I need not enlarge upon this topic, because the case of Shakespeare's sonnets is only too familiar to every student of English literature. I have adduced the instance simply because it is a crucial one—one in which the competent critic should hail every contribution made by research or formulated by a scheming brain for the solution of a sphinx-like problem, but should avoid like a hidden rock—*tanquam scopulum*—any temptation to construct a biographical romance out of elements so slender, until irrefutable facts have been presented. In a word, criticism welcomes research, welcomes discovery, welcomes constructive ingenuity. But she does not recognise these things as criticism, and holds a dubious balance until the case seems proved. The same may be said about the less enigmatical problem of Tasso's relation to Leonora d'Este. Let the critic state the problem as he finds it, but not engage (unless he be convinced) in any of its plausible solutions. Enough is left for the exercise of his æsthetic judgment in the poetry of Shakespeare's and of Tasso's sonnets.

These remarks bring to light two relations in which the spirit of research and erudition is dangerous to criticism.

In the first place it inclines people to make too much of mere externals—as though one should persuade himself that a knowledge of the bibliography of the "Paradise Lost" is essential to the comprehension of that poem, or that the "Faery Queen" demands a preparatory training in Anglo-Saxon. You may know everything about the editions of Milton's poems, and have their misprints at your fingers' end, and yet remain incapable of feeling what is sublime in Milton's conception and artistic in his execution. You may be acquainted with the history of our language in all its stages, and may be able to point out Spenser's archæologisms, without touching the points which make his epic valuable for culture. You may discourse with the tongue of an angel upon the

dates of Shakespeare's plays, and at the same time show a stolid incapacity for apprehending their true drift and nervous grip on human life. In short, bibliography, linguistic studies, questions of dates and sources, are only important as ancillary to the real work of criticism, which is to interpret the workings of the human spirit by its monuments in art and letters.

In the second place, erudition, when not controlled by vigorous sense, encourages what may be described as the nidification of mares' nests—a malady most incident to ingenious but flighty theorists, who nourish the grotesque fictions of their ignorance upon the milk of their ill-assimilated learning. The misuse of erudition leads to such fundamental misconceptions as that which vitiates Dr. Guest's great work on English Rhythms. It renders the hypothesis of Bacon's authorship of Shakespeare's plays attractive in the eyes of incompetent students. It inflates blathery compilations on esoteric Buddhism, Spiritualism, the history of Secret Societies, the migrations of the ten Lost Tribes, Phallic Worship, Apocalyptic Prophecy. For years it has infected speculative writing on the evolution of religions, the interpretation of mythology, the origin of language, ethnology, phrenology, chiromancy, and all the bastard brood descended from mediæval astrology and magic. It taints the otherwise sound work of many scholars of the German type, who have not common sense or knowledge of life enough to save them from fabricating preposterous solutions of perplexing problems, and applying the resources of their knowledge to supporting major premisses which are palpably absurd.

Learning cannot come amiss to those who understand its use. He who has most of it is best equipped for criticism. But learning does not supply the critical faculty. To criticism it is the necessary foundation and a serviceable handmaid. Rightly employed, learning checks caprice, sustains our feet on solid ground, and leads to hidden paths whereby we may approach the truth. Misused, it smothers intuition in a jungle

of cumbrous and unimportant details, diverts attention from the proper end of culture, or bases the vagaries of the fancy upon sand-banks and rubble.

It seems trite to say so—yet common sense, implying knowledge of human nature, prudence, shrewdness, the power of weighing evidence, is the main quality for the critic. Learning gives weight and force; it is indispensable. But learning is as nothing, or as worse than nothing, unless sound judgment stand above it. Sense, like charity in S. Paul's exposition of the virtues, is the one and saving faculty—"though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though my memory is stored with the *omne scibile*, and I have not common sense, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Without this, erudition obscures the main points at issue, and transforms the mirage of illusion into momentary domes and towers. A sensible, unlettered girl is a better critic than the learned simpleton who uses the stores of a vast library to bolster up some baseless paradox. Sense, in the region of criticism, is equivalent to imagination. It enables its possessor to distinguish what is or may be from what cannot be.

IX.

The critical faculty may be described then as trained perception in a man endowed with common sense and sound imagination. This faculty may be exercised in every branch of knowledge; but for its particular display in any single province we have to presuppose special qualifications (natural and acquired, physical and mental), which enable the skilled interpreter and judge to pronounce opinions with more authority than the rest of mankind. A critic of music need not be a critic of poetry; nor do we seek enlightenment on the art of painting from a judge of horseflesh.

Finally, the critic must beware of his subjective bias, and keep himself resolutely in accord with the common wisdom

of humanity. No single wise man decides any question. A consensus of wise men is needed to establish taste. He must not suffer himself to be diverted by partialities and predilections into side-currents. His duty it is to abide by commanding principles, and, living in the whole, to appreciate the correlation of the subject he has chosen with the complex of man's intellectual and moral nature.

THE PROVINCES OF THE SEVERAL ARTS.

I.

"ART," said Goethe, "is but form-giving." We might vary this definition, and say, "Art is a method of expression or presentation." Then comes the question: If art gives form, if it is a method of expression or presentation, to what does it give form, what does it express or present? The answer certainly must be: Art gives form to human consciousness; expresses or presents the feeling or the thought of man. Whatever else art may do by the way, in the communication of innocent pleasures, in the adornment of life and the softening of manners, in the creation of beautiful shapes and sounds, this, at all events, is its prime function.

While investing thought and sentiment, the spiritual subject-matter of all art, with form, or finding for it proper modes of presentation, each of the arts employs a special medium, obeying the laws of beauty proper to that medium. The vehicles of the arts, roughly speaking, are solid substances (like ivory, stone, wood, metal), pigments, sounds, and words. The masterly handling of these vehicles and the realisation of their characteristic types of beauty have come to be regarded as the craftsman's paramount concern. And in a certain sense this is a right conclusion; for dexterity in the manipulation of the chosen vehicle, and power to create a beautiful object, distinguish the successful artist from the man who may have had like thoughts and feelings. This dexterity, this power, are the properties of the artist *quâ* artist. Yet we

must not forget that the form created by the artist for the expression of a thought or feeling is not the final end of art itself. That form, after all, is but the mode of presentation through which the spiritual content manifests itself. Beauty, in like manner, is not the final end of art, but is the indispensable condition under which the artistic manifestation of the spiritual content must be made. It is the business of art to create an ideal world, in which perception, emotion, understanding, action, all elements of human life sublimed by thought, shall reappear in concrete forms as beauty. This being so, the logical criticism of art demands that we should not only estimate the technical skill of an artist and his faculty for presenting beauty to the æsthetic sense, but that we should also ask ourselves what portion of the human spirit he has chosen to invest with form, and how he has conceived his subject. It is not necessary that the ideas embodied in a work of art should be the artist's own. They may be common to the race and age: as, for instance, the conception of sovereign deity expressed in the Olympian Zeus of Pheidias, or the conception of divine maternity expressed in Raphael's Madonna di San Sisto. Still the personality of the artist, his own intellectual and moral nature, his peculiar way of thinking and feeling, his individual attitude toward the material given to him in ideas of human consciousness, will modify his choice of subject and of form, and will determine his specific type of beauty. To take an example: supposing that an idea, common to his race and age, is given to the artist for treatment; this will be the final end of the work of art which he produces. But his personal qualities and technical performance determine the degree of success or failure to which he attains in seizing that idea and in presenting it with beauty. Signorelli fails where Perugino excels, in giving adequate and lovely form to the religious sentiment. Michel Angelo is sure of the sublime, and Raphael of the beautiful.

Art is thus the expression of the human spirit by the artist

to his fellow-men. The subject-matter of the arts is commensurate with what man thinks and feels and does. It is as deep as religion, as wide as life. But what distinguishes art from religion or from life is, that this subject-matter must assume beautiful form, and must be presented directly or indirectly to the senses. Art is not the school or the cathedral, but the playground, the paradise of humanity. It does not teach, it does not preach. Nothing abstract enters into art's domain. Truth and goodness are transmuted into beauty there, just as in science beauty and goodness assume the shape of truth, and in religion truth and beauty become goodness. The rigid definitions, the unmistakable laws of science, are not to be found in art. Whatever art has touched acquires a concrete sensuous embodiment, and thus ideas presented to the mind in art have lost a portion of their pure thought-essence. It is on this account that the religious conceptions of the Greeks were so admirably fitted for the art of sculpture, and certain portions of the mediæval Christian mythology lent themselves so well to painting. For the same reason the metaphysics of ecclesiastical dogma defy the artist's plastic faculty. Art, in a word, is a middle term between reason and the senses. Its secondary aim, after the prime end of manifesting the human spirit in beautiful form has been accomplished, is to give tranquil and innocent enjoyment.

II.

From what has gone before, it will be seen that no human being can make or mould a beautiful form without incorporating in that form some portion of the human mind, however crude, however elementary. In other words, there is no work of art without a theme, without a motive, without a subject. The presentation of that theme, that motive, that subject, is the final end of art. The art is good or bad according as the subject has been well or ill presented, consistently with the laws of beauty special to the art itself.

Thus we obtain two standards for æsthetic criticism. We judge a statue, for example, both by the sculptor's intellectual grasp upon his subject, and also by his technical skill and sense of beauty. In a picture of the Last Judgment by Fra Angelico we say that the bliss of the righteous has been more successfully treated than the torments of the wicked, because the former has been better understood, although the painter's skill in each is equal. In the Perseus of Cellini we admire the sculptor's spirit, finish of execution, and originality of design, while we deplore that want of sympathy with the heroic character which makes his type of physical beauty slightly vulgar and his facial expression vacuous.

If the phrase "Art for art's sake" has any meaning, this meaning is simply that the artist, having chosen a theme, thinks exclusively in working at it of technical dexterity or the quality of beauty. There are many inducements for the artist thus to narrow his function, and for the critic to assist him by applying the canons of a soulless connoisseurship to his work; for the conception of the subject is but the starting-point in art-production, and the artist's difficulties and triumphs as a craftsman lie in the region of technicalities. He knows, moreover, that however deep or noble his idea may be, his work of art will be worthless if it fail in skill or be devoid of beauty. What converts a thought into a statue or a picture, is the form found for it; and so the form itself seems all-important. The artist, therefore, too easily imagines that he may neglect his theme; that a fine piece of colouring, a well-balanced composition, or, as Cellini put it, "un bel corpo ignudo," is enough. And this is especially easy in an age which reflects much upon the arts, and pursues them with enthusiasm, while its deeper thoughts and sentiments are not of the kind which translate themselves readily into artistic form. But, after all, a fine piece of colouring, a well-balanced composition, a sonorous stanza, a learned essay in counterpoint, are not enough. They are all

excellent good things, yielding delight to the artistic sense and instruction to the student. Yet when we think of the really great statues, pictures, poems, music of the world, we find that these are really great because of something more—and that more is their theme, their presentation of a noble portion of the human soul. Artists and art-students may be satisfied with perfect specimens of a craftsman's skill, independent of his theme; but the mass of men will not be satisfied; and it is as wrong to suppose that art exists for artists and art-students, as to talk of art for art's sake. Art exists for humanity. Art transmutes thought and feeling into terms of beautiful form. Art is great and lasting in proportion as it appeals to the human consciousness at large, presenting to it portions of itself in adequate and lovely form.

III.

It was necessary in the first place firmly to apprehend the truth that the final end of all art is the presentation of a spiritual content; it is necessary in the next place to remove confusions by considering the special circumstances of the several arts.

Each art has its own vehicle of expression. What it can present and how it can present it, depends upon the nature of this vehicle. Thus, though architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, meet upon the common ground of spiritualised experience—though the works of art produced by the architect, sculptor, painter, musician, poet, emanate from the spiritual nature of the race, are coloured by the spiritual nature of the men who make them, and express what is spiritual in humanity under concrete forms invented for them by the artist—yet it is certain that all of these arts do not deal exactly with the same portions of this common material in the same way or with the same results. Each has its own department. Each exhibits qualities of strength and weakness special to itself. To define these several

departments, to explain the relation of these several vehicles of presentation to the common subject-matter, is the next step in criticism.

IV.

Of the fine arts, architecture alone subserves utility. We build for use. But the geometrical proportions which the architect observes, contain the element of beauty and powerfully influence the soul. Into the language of arch and aisle and colonnade, of cupola and façade and pediment, of spire and vault, the architect translates emotion, vague perhaps but deep, mute but unmistakable. When we say that a building is sublime or graceful, frivolous or stern, we mean that sublimity or grace, frivolity or sternness, is inherent in it. The emotions connected with these qualities are inspired in us when we contemplate it, and are presented to us by its form. Whether the architect deliberately aimed at the sublime or graceful—whether the dignified serenity of the Athenian genius sought to express itself in the Parthenon, and the mysticism of mediæval Christianity in the gloom of Chartres Cathedral—whether it was Renaissance paganism which gave its mundane pomp and glory to S. Peter's, and the refined selfishness of royalty its specious splendour to the palace of Versailles—need not be curiously questioned. The fact that we are impelled to raise these points, that architecture more almost than any art connects itself indissolubly with the life, the character, the moral being of a nation and an epoch, proves that we are justified in bringing it beneath our general definition of the arts. In a great measure because it subserves utility, and is therefore dependent upon the necessities of life, does architecture present to us through form the human spirit. Comparing the palace built by Giulio Romano for the Dukes of Mantua with the contemporary castle of a German prince, we cannot fail at once to comprehend the difference of spiritual con-

ditions, as these displayed themselves in daily life, which then separated Italy from the Teutonic nations. But this is not all. Spiritual quality in the architect himself finds clear expression in his work. Coldness combined with violence marks Brunelleschi's churches; a certain suavity and well-bred taste the work of Bramante; while Michel Angelo exhibits wayward energy in his Library of S. Lorenzo, and Amadeo self-abandonment to fancy in his Lombard chapels. I have chosen examples from one nation and one epoch in order that the point I seek to make, the demonstration of a spiritual quality in buildings, may be fairly stated.

V.

Sculpture and painting distinguish themselves from the other fine arts by the imitation of concrete existences in nature. They copy the bodies of men and animals, the aspects of the world around us, and the handiwork of mankind. Yet, in so far as they are rightly arts, they do not make imitation an object in itself. The grapes of Zeuxis at which birds pecked, the painted dog at which a cat's hair bristles—if such grapes or such a dog were ever put on canvas—are but evidences of the artist's skill, not of his faculty as artist. These two plastic, or, as I prefer to call them, figurative arts, use their imitation of the external world for the expression, the presentation of internal, spiritual things. The human form is for them the outward symbol of the inner human spirit, and their power of presenting spirit is limited by the means at their disposal.

Sculpture employs stone, wood, clay, the precious metals, to model forms, detached and independent, or raised upon a flat surface in relief. Its domain is the whole range of human character and consciousness, in so far as these can be indicated by fixed facial expression, by physical type, and by attitude. If we dwell for an instant on the greatest historical epoch of sculpture, we shall understand the domain

of this art in its range and limitation. At a certain point of Greek development the Hellenic Pantheon began to be translated by the sculptors into statues; and when the genius of the Greeks expired in Rome, the cycle of their psychological conceptions had been exhaustively presented through this medium. During that long period of time, the most delicate gradations of human personality, divinised, idealised, were submitted to the contemplation of the consciousness which gave them being, in appropriate types. Strength and swiftness, massive force and airy lightness, contemplative repose and active energy, voluptuous softness and refined grace, intellectual sublimity and lascivious seductiveness—the whole rhythm of qualities which can be typified by bodily form—were analysed, selected, combined in various degrees, to incarnate the religious conceptions of Zeus, Aphrodite, Herakles, Dionysus, Pallas, Fauns and Satyrs, Nymphs of woods and waves, Tritons, the genius of Death, heroes and hunters, lawgivers and poets, presiding deities of minor functions, man's lustful appetites and sensual needs. All that men think, or do, or are, or wish for, or imagine in this world, had found exact corporeal equivalents. Not physiognomy alone, but all the portions of the body upon which the habits of the animating soul are wont to stamp themselves, were studied and employed as symbolism. Uranian Aphrodite was distinguished from her Pandemic sister by chastened, lust-repelling loveliness. The muscles of Herakles were more ponderous than the tense sinews of Achilles. The Hermes of the palæstra bore a torso of majestic depth; the Hermes who carried messages from heaven had limbs alert for movement. The brows of Zeus inspired awe; the breasts of Dionysus breathed delight.

A race accustomed, as the Greeks were, to read this symbolism, accustomed, as the Greeks were, to note the individuality of naked form, had no difficulty in interpreting the language of sculpture. Nor is there even now much

difficulty in the task. Our surest guide to the subject of a bas-relief or statue is study of the physical type considered as symbolical of spiritual quality. From the fragment of a torso the true critic can say whether it belongs to the athletic or the erotic species. A limb of Bacchus differs from a limb of Poseidon. The whole psychological conception of Aphrodite Pandemos enters into every muscle, every joint, no less than into her physiognomy, her hair, her attitude.

There is, however, a limit to the domain of sculpture. This art deals most successfully with personified generalities. It is also strong in the presentation of incarnate character. But when it attempts to tell a story, we often seek in vain its meaning. Battles of Amazons or Centaurs upon bas-reliefs, indeed, are unmistakable. The subject is indicated here by some external sign. The group of Laocoön appeals at once to a reader of Virgil, and the divine vengeance of Leto's children upon Niobe is manifest in the Uffizzi marbles. But who are the several heroes of the Æginetan pediment, and what was the subject of the Pheidian statues on the Parthenon? Do the three graceful figures of a bas-relief which exists at Naples and in the Villa Albani, represent Orpheus, Hermes, and Eurydice, or Antiope and her two sons? Was the winged and sworded genius upon the Ephesus column meant for a genius of Death or a genius of Love?

This dimness of significance indicates the limitation of sculpture, and inclines some of those who feel its charm to assert that the sculptor seeks to convey no intellectual meaning, that he is satisfied with the creation of beautiful form. There is an element of good sense in this revolt against the faith which holds that art is nothing but a mode of spiritual presentation. Truly the artist aims at producing beauty, is satisfied if he conveys delight. But it is impossible to escape from the certainty that, while he is creating forms of beauty, he means something, feels something; and that something, that theme for which he finds the form, is part of the world's

spiritual heritage. Only the crudest works of figurative art, capricci and arabesques, have no intellectual content ; and even these are good in so far as they convey the playfulness of fancy.

VI.

Painting employs colours upon surfaces—walls, panels, canvas. What has been said about sculpture will apply in a great measure to this art. The human form, the world around us, the works of man's hands, are represented in painting, not for their own sake merely, but with the view of bringing thought, feeling, action, home to the consciousness of the spectator from the artist's consciousness on which they have been impressed. Painting can tell a story better than sculpture, can represent more complicated feelings, can suggest thoughts of a subtler intricacy. Through colour, it can play, like music, directly on powerful but vague emotion. It is deficient in the fulness and roundness of concrete reality. A statue stands before us, the soul incarnate in palpable form, fixed and frozen for eternity. The picture is a reflection cast upon a magic glass ; not less permanent, but reduced to a shadow of palpable reality. To follow these distinctions farther would be alien from the present purpose. It is enough to repeat that, within their several spheres, according to their several strengths and weaknesses, both sculpture and painting present the spirit to us only as the spirit shows itself immersed in things of sense. The light of a lamp enclosed within an alabaster vase is still lamplight, though shorn of lustre and toned to coloured softness. Even thus the spirit, immersed in things of sense presented to us by the figurative arts, is still spirit, though diminished in its intellectual clearness and invested with hues not its own. To fashion that alabaster form of art with utmost skill, to make it beautiful, to render it transparent, is the artist's function. But he will have failed of the highest if the light within burns dim, or if he gives the world a lamp in which no spiritual flame is lighted.

VII.

Music transports us to a different region. Like architecture, it imitates nothing. It uses pure sound, and sound of the most wholly artificial kind—so artificial that the musical sounds of one race are unmusical, and therefore unintelligible, to another. Like architecture, music relies upon mathematical proportions. Unlike architecture, music serves no utility. It is the purest art of pleasure—the truest paradise and playground of the spirit. It has less power than painting, even less power than sculpture, to tell a story or to communicate an idea. For we must remember that when music is married to words, the words, and not the music, reach our thinking faculty. And yet, in spite of all this, music presents man's spirit to itself through form. The domain of the spirit over which music reigns, is emotion—not defined emotion, not feeling even so generally defined as jealousy or anger—but those broad bases of man's being out of which emotions spring, defining themselves through action into this or that set type of feeling. Architecture, we have noticed, is so connected with specific modes of human existence, that from its main examples we can reconstruct the life of men who used it. Sculpture and painting, by limiting their presentation to the imitation of external things, have all the help which experience and association render. The mere artificiality of music's vehicle separates it from life and makes its message untranslatable. Nevertheless, this very disability under which it labours is the secret of its extraordinary potency.

To expect clear definition from music—the definition which belongs to poetry—would be absurd. The sphere of music is in sensuous perception ; the sphere of poetry is in intelligence. Music, dealing with pure sound, must always be vaguer in significance than poetry, which deals with words. Nevertheless its effect upon the sentient subject may be more intense and penetrating for this very reason. We cannot

fail to understand what words are intended to convey; we may very easily interpret in a hundred different ways the message of sound. But this is not because words are wider in their reach and more alive; rather because they are more limited, more stereotyped, more dead. They symbolise something precise and unmistakable; but this precision is itself attenuation of the something symbolised. The exact value of the counter is better understood when it is a word than when it is a chord, because all that a word conveys has already become a thought, while all that musical sounds convey remains within the region of emotion which has not been intellectualised.[1] Poetry touches emotion through the thinking faculty. If music reaches the thinking faculty at all, it is through fibres of emotion. But emotion, when it has become thought, has already lost a portion of its force, and has taken to itself a something alien to its nature. Therefore the message of music can never rightly be translated into words. It is the very largeness and vividness of the sphere of simple feeling which makes its symbolical counterpart in sound so seeming vague. But in spite of this incontestable defect of seeming vagueness, an emotion expressed by music is nearer to our sentient self, if we have ears to take it in, than the same emotion limited by language. It is intenser, it is more immediate, as compensation for being less intelligible, less unmistakable in meaning. It is an infinite, an indistinct, where each consciousness defines and sets a limitary form.

Nothing intervenes between the musical work of art and the fibres of the sentient being it immediately thrills. We do not seek to say what music means. We feel the music. And if a man should pretend that the music has not passed beyond his ears, has communicated nothing but a musical delight, he simply tells us that he has not felt music. The ancients on

[1] "Thought," said Novalis somewhere, "is only a pale, desiccated emotion."

this point were wiser than some moderns when, without pretending to assign an intellectual significance to music, they held for an axiom that one type of music bred one type of character, another type another. A change in the music of a state, wrote Plato, will be followed by changes in its constitution. It is of the utmost importance, said Aristotle, to provide in education for the use of the ennobling and the fortifying moods. These philosophers knew that music creates a spiritual world, in which the spirit cannot live and move without contracting habits of emotion. In this vagueness of significance but intensity of feeling lies the magic of music. A melody occurs to the composer, which he certainly connects with no act of the reason, which he is probably unconscious of connecting with any movement of his feeling, but which nevertheless is the form in sound of an emotional mood. When he reflects upon the melody secreted thus impromptu, he is aware, as we learn from his own lips, that this work has correspondence with emotion. Beethoven calls one symphony Heroic, another Pastoral; of the opening of another he says, "Fate knocks at the door." Mozart sets comic words to the mass-music of a friend, in order to mark his sense of its inaptitude for religious sentiment. All composers use phrases like Maestoso, Pomposo, Allegro, Lagrimoso, Con Fuoco, to express the general complexion of the mood their music ought to represent.

VIII.

Before passing to poetry, it may be well to turn aside and consider two subordinate arts, which deserve a place in any system of æsthetics. These are dancing and acting. Dancing uses the living human form, and presents feeling or action, the passions and the deeds of men, in artificially educated movements of the body. The element of beauty it possesses, independently of the beauty of the dancer, is rhythm. Acting or the art of mimicry presents the same subject-matter, no

longer under the conditions of fixed rhythm, but as an ideal reproduction of reality. The actor is what he represents, and the element of beauty in his art is perfection of realisation. It is his duty as an artist to show us Orestes or Othello, not perhaps exactly as Othello and Orestes were, but as the essence of their tragedies, ideally incorporate in action, ought to be. The actor can do this in dumb show. Some of the greatest actors of the ancient world were mimes. But he usually interprets a poet's thought, and attempts to present an artistic conception in a secondary form of art, which has for its advantage his own personality in play.

IX.

The last of the fine arts is literature; or, in the narrower sphere of which it will be well to speak here only, is poetry. Poetry employs words in fixed rhythms, which we call metres. Only a small portion of its effect is derived from the beauty of its sound. It appeals to the sense of hearing far less immediately than music does. It makes no appeal to the eyesight, and takes no help from the beauty of colour. It produces no palpable, tangible object. But language being the storehouse of all human experience, language being the medium whereby spirit communicates with spirit in affairs of life, the vehicle which transmits to us the thoughts and feelings of the past, and on which we rely for continuing our present to the future, it follows that, of all the arts, poetry soars highest, flies widest, and is most at home in the region of the spirit. What poetry lacks of sensuous fulness, it more than balances by intellectual intensity. Its significance is unmistakable, because it employs the very material men use in their exchange of thoughts and correspondence of emotions. To the bounds of its empire there is no end. It embraces in its own more abstract being all the arts. By words it does the work in turn of architecture, sculpture, painting, music. It is the metaphysic of the fine arts.

Philosophy finds place in poetry; and life itself, refined to its last utterance, hangs trembling on this thread which joins our earth to heaven, this bridge between experience and the realms where unattainable and imperceptible will have no meaning.

If we are right in defining art as the manifestation of the human spirit to man by man in beautiful form, poetry, more incontestably than any other art, fulfils this definition and enables us to gauge its accuracy. For words are the spirit, manifested to itself in symbols with no sensual alloy. Poetry is therefore the presentation, through words, of life and all that life implies. Perception, emotion, thought, action, find in descriptive, lyrical, reflective, dramatic, and epical poetry their immediate apocalypse. In poetry we are no longer puzzled with problems as to whether art has or has not of necessity a spiritual content. There cannot be any poetry whatsoever without a spiritual meaning of some sort: good or bad, moral, immoral, or non-moral, obscure or lucid, noble or ignoble, slight or weighty—such distinctions do not signify. In poetry we are not met by questions whether the poet intended to convey a meaning when he made it. Quite meaningless poety (as some critics would fain find melody quite meaningless, or a statue meaningless, or a Venetian picture meaningless) is a contradiction in terms. In poetry, life, or a portion of life, lives again, resuscitated and presented to our mental faculty through art. The best poetry is that which reproduces the most of life, or its intensest moments. Therefore the extensive species of the drama and the epic, the intensive species of the lyric, have been ever held in highest esteem. Only a paradoxical critic maintains the thesis that poetry is excellent in so far as it assimilates the vagueness of music, or estimates a poet by his power of translating sense upon the border-land of nonsense into melodious words. Where poetry falls short in the comparison with other arts, is in

the quality of form-giving, in the quality of sensuous concreteness. Poetry can only present forms to the mental eye and to the intellectual sense, stimulate the physical senses by indirect suggestion. Therefore dramatic poetry, the most complicated kind of poetry, relies upon the actor; and lyrical poetry, the intensest kind of poetry, seeks the aid of music. But these comparative deficiencies are overbalanced, for all the highest purposes of art, by the width and depth, the intelligibility and power, the flexibility and multitudinous associations of language. The other arts are limited in what they utter. There is nothing which has entered into the life of man which poetry cannot express. Poetry says everything in man's own language to the mind. The other arts appeal imperatively, each in its own region, to man's senses; and the mind receives art's message by the help of symbols from the world of sense. Poetry lacks this immediate appeal to sense. But the elixir which it offers to the mind, its quintessence extracted from all things of sense, reacts through intellectual perception upon all the faculties that make men what they are.

X.

I used a metaphor in one of the foregoing paragraphs to indicate the presence of the vital spirit, the essential element of thought or feeling, in the work of art. I said it radiated through the form, as lamplight through an alabaster vase. Now the skill of the artist is displayed in modelling that vase, in giving it shape, rich and rare, and fashioning its curves with subtlest workmanship. In so far as he is a craftsman, the artist's pains must be bestowed upon this precious vessel of the animating theme. In so far as he has power over beauty, he must exert it in this plastic act. It is here that he displays dexterity; here that he creates; here that he separates himself from other men who think and feel. The poet, more perhaps than any other artist,

needs to keep this steadily in view; for words being our daily vehicle of utterance, it may well chance that the alabaster vase of language should be hastily or trivially modelled. This is the true reason why "neither gods nor men nor the columns either suffer mediocrity in singers." Upon the poet it is specially incumbent to see that he has something rare to say and some rich mode of saying it. The figurative arts need hardly be so cautioned. They run their risk in quite a different direction. For sculptor and for painter, the danger is lest he should think that alabaster vase his final task. He may too easily be satisfied with moulding a beautiful but empty form.

ON THE RELATION OF ART TO SCIENCE AND MORALITY.

I.

THE most singular phenomenon of language in its relation to thought is our inability to define the words expressive of ideas by which we are principally influenced in life. We cannot make satisfactory definitions of God, goodness, truth, beauty, poetry, love. The prudent man abstains from definitions in such cases, feeling sure that his audience, if they are capable of listening to his argument, will be provided with general notions sufficient to make his meaning clear.

Perhaps the reason why no satisfactory definitions can be given of goodness, beauty, truth, is that these ideas blend in our spiritual nature, so that, when we seek to distinguish them, we violate the unity of our higher self.

Yet a man may be permitted at times to play this impossible game of definitions as a kind of intellectual pastime, recognising its inefficiency, but acknowledging suggestive and stimulative value in the sport.

We may say, for instance, that goodness is the quality in things and living creatures which makes them perfect in their several kinds, and adapts them to their special functions. It is a quality of essence.

We may say that beauty is the quality in things and living creatures which makes them delightful to our sensi-

bility. It is inseparable from some mode of presentation. It is a quality, not of essence, but of aspect and appearance.

We may say that truth is conformity to what is actual and capable of demonstration; or subjectively, that is the exact apprehension by our mind of facts as they really are, whether these be good or bad, beautiful or ugly. It is a quality, not of aspect, but of essence.

Still we know that there is no beauty worthy of the name without truth and without a certain sort of goodness. We feel that goodness is the highest kind of truth, and that truth is good. We recognise that every truth, once demonstrated, has a right to be called beautiful. It is only needful to fix attention on the contrary ideas of badness, ugliness, falsity, in order to perceive that their intrusion into the sphere of the good, the beautiful, the true, vitiates our radical conception of those virtues. Beauty cannot be bad; goodness cannot be false; truth cannot be ugly—and so on, ringing all the changes on their combinations.

From the most abstract point of view, goodness, beauty, truth are in reality inseparable. Religion presents us with an ideal of the universal Being, in whom they co-exist without one flaw or note of difference. This is religion's way of presenting to our minds the ideal unity of our own nature, the type of self to which humanity aspires.

But we immediately divide them in our understanding. It is the function of the intelligence to decompose abstractions. Intelligence deals with concrete things; and the concrete is always the differentiated. Thus we use the word *good* in different senses. We speak, for instance, of good iron, a good horse, good beef; but we reserve the name *goodness* for the dominant excellence of human beings, moral virtue. To this quality we assign ethics; to truth, science; to beauty, æsthetics.

In ethics, right conduct is good in itself, beautiful to the imagination, true to our apprehension of permanent relations.

In æsthetics, a fine work of art is beautiful to the percipient sense, good by its thoroughness of execution, true by exactitude of delineation. In science, a theory is true because it accounts for the facts and is capable of demonstration, beautiful by reason of its lucidity, good because it can be depended on and fulfils its purpose.

So far we may apply the terms of each province to the subject-matter of the others. This must not, however, blind us to the fact that morality, art, and science—which are severally concerned with goodness, beauty, and truth—require to be considered separately. Each exists for itself, notwithstanding those reciprocal affinities, to which language testifies, and which are deeply grounded in our nature. Thus morality holds up for admiration many things which we recognise as essentially good, but which can only be called beautiful by a metaphor—such as suffering a horrid death for conscience' sake or the discharge of distasteful duties. Art, on the contrary, may produce forms which are physically beautiful, but which stimulate appetites or suggest thoughts alien to moral rightness. Science, again, is indifferent alike to beauty and to moral goodness. It seeks the law of ugliness, disease, and crime, no less than the law of beauty, health, and virtue. Their ends in like manner differ. Morality tends to right conduct, art to noble pleasure, science to knowledge and control of facts. Of the three, morality is by far the most complex, because it is concerned with nothing less than the whole nature of man—ourselves—the most vitally important, and also the most inscrutable matter for inquiry. For the same reason it is also the most undetermined of the three ; in its province nothing has, as yet, been reduced to the certainty of law. Therefore it relies on religion for the sanction, and on jurisprudence for the enforcement, of its ruling principles. Standing in a certain sense between science and art, it derives information from the former, and exercises supervision over the latter. And forasmuch as right conduct

is more precious to man than either noble pleasure or the knowledge and control of facts, morality has to provide that neither the scientific pursuit of knowledge nor the æsthetical supply of pleasure shall compromise the rectitude of the will in action. Morality, in fact, as Aristotle said long ago, is architectonic ; and goodness, for human nature, is the queen over truth and beauty.

II.

At the end of His seven days' labour of creation, "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." It was not *good for nothing*, nor merely *good for something*, but *good in itself*, as corresponding to its destined ends and uses. This goodness of the world included and implied its truth and beauty also. For the infinite mind it was enough to call the world by that noblest name of good. But man's understanding acts like a prism, which breaks white light into its component colours. We are obliged to regard the outer world from theoretically separate points of view. We look at things (1) in themselves, (2) in their aspects and appearances, (3) in their relation to utility and purpose, (4) in their relation to conduct. The attempt to ascertain what they are leads to science. The attempt to seize their aspects and appearances leads to art. When we consider their qualities with reference to use and purpose, this calls into action practical wisdom. Viewed from the point of view of conduct, they suggest morality. A similar process of disintegration, due to man's partial power of mental vision, may be traced in our ways of dealing with the inner world of our own selves. Psychology scrutinises the phenomena of mind without reference to conduct. Morality erects standards of duty and of social utility ; it is not content with facts and phenomena ; it sees them in relation to ulterior ends. Art regards physical form, the aspects of human action, the appearances of passion and emotion ; it does not care for scientific explana-

tions of what and how and why; it is not primarily concerned with moral quality; it is content with impressions and the presentation of impressions.

Many things are beautiful in art which morality condemns, which have no practical utility, which science passes over in a sentence of three words. Many things are morally admirable, practically valuable, scientifically of enthralling interest, which leave art cold, indifferent, disdainful. Art is the expression of man's delight in nature and his sympathy with human joys and sufferings. Science is the expression of man's curiosity, the outcome of his analytical investigation. Practical wisdom is the expression of man's will and power to utilise things in his own interest. Morality is the expression of man's self-consciousness and judgment as to the right and wrong of conduct, governed by subjective qualities inherent in a race or epoch.

Reality, and consequently truth, is involved in all these several ways of regarding the outer and the inner world. The aspects and appearances of things, their practical utilities and values, their ethical and social relations, are no less facts for us than are their essence, component elements, manners of behaviour. But science has primarily to do with things as they are, art with their aspects and appearances, practical wisdom with their utilities, morality with their relation to the spiritual organism. It is because we cannot see the whole at once that we divide in this way.

III.

Art, which deals mainly with aspects and appearances, and which aims at noble pleasure, has a special duty to be mindful of the admonitions given by her sisters. She seeks to present the outer and the inner worlds to human sensibilities; she must do this truthfully, she must do it wholesomely, at the risk of wounding or insulting sensibility. She claims to reveal new joys; she brings to light permanent and inex-

haustible treasures of loveliness, which the material universe and the soul of man contain, but which elude the eyes of those who have not caught their aspects in her magic mirror. How can she fulfil this function if she sees falsely or feels basely? The more we reflect, the more are we led to the conviction that art cannot neglect the correspondences between beauty and truth, beauty and goodness, beauty and use. The more we drive issues to their ultimate conclusion, the more clear will it appear that beauty, which deserves that name, cannot exist without truth, goodness, serviceable quality. In proportion as beauty includes these elements, it is vigorous, enduring, vital, universal, for all times and nations. In proportion as it excludes them, it is illusory, phantasmal, perishable, partial to a race or moment.

Nevertheless, there is no denying the fact that art, through this appeal to sensibility, no less than through the pursuit of pleasure as an aim, contains an element of weakness, from which morality and science are free. There are ignoble pleasures, and sensibility is sometimes morbid. Art, if she chooses, can provide the former and can gratify the latter, without quitting the domain of beauty. She can turn herself at will from an Egeria or a Pythia into a Circe or a Siren.

Art, again, has nothing in herself to discipline the moral nature of her servants. They bring to her the spirits which they had, and she responds to them or fails to touch them.

A great artist never works from a consciously scientific or a consciously ethical point of view. He has no didactic purpose ; he does not aim at proving anything. He is satisfied with making something ; and this something may be of very various sorts in regard to truth and goodness. It remains certain, however, that he is unable to make anything without exercising the spirit which is in him ; and this spirit involves principles which are proper to both science and morality.

Architecture, to begin with, rests upon geometrical proportions. Music, which Sir Thomas Browne styled "a sensible

fit of that harmony which intellectually sounds in the ears of God," is dependent upon mathematical ratios. The figurative arts seek after correctness of design, correctness of perspective, correctness of tone. They need truth of delineation, "conformity to what is real," "exact apprehension of facts." So far as they are imitative, veracity is one of their cardinal virtues. To this extent, then, art partakes of the scientific spirit.

When we come to consider the function of the arts in history, their social and educational importance, together with the thoughts and feelings they express, the point of contact between them and morality is even more apparent. I have elsewhere insisted on the fact that no work of art is absolutely unqualified by moral tone of one sort or another, seeing that all such works are the products of a moralised personality. The mode of handling and treatment, what we call style, communicates, dimly perhaps, but certainly, something from the artist's nature to the sensibility of the percipient. The same face painted by Greuze, Raphael, and Lionardo da Vinci would affect us with very different sentiments. The same torso modelled by Pheidias, Cellini, Gian Bologna, and Michel Angelo would awake widely dissimilar sensations. The same musical theme handled by Mozart, Cherubini, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Rossini would transport us into diverse regions of emotion. Thus, at the very beginning of the matter, each artist exercises a specific moral influence, without deliberate intention, by the mere display of personality.

If we proceed further, and regard the subject-matter of the arts, this connection with morality becomes still more marked. Except in purely decorative work, art cannot escape from conveying a meaning of some sort. It may therefore be used, and it has been used, to inculcate religion and to stimulate licentiousness, to exhibit the strength of heroes and the constancy of martyrs, to reveal the seductions of the senses or the poignant fascination of bloodthirsty passions. We need

hardly mention poetry in this discussion ; for poetry, by its command of words, embraces the whole sphere of human nature. Not only all the acts of men and women, but all their thoughts and emotions, their aspirations toward a better state of being, their affinities with brutes, their capacity to sink below the brutes into devildom, belong to verbal expression. For this reason Milton regarded poetry as the fundamental instrument in education. Logic and rhetoric, he observes, have their important place in mental training ; "to which poetry should be made subsequent, or indeed rather precedent, as being less subtle and fine, but more simple, sensuous, and passionate." Poetry, to quote another phrase from Milton, "with a solid and treatable smoothness points out and describes" whatsoever is presented in abstract form by theology, philosophy, history, logic, and rhetoric. From poetry, therefore, through its simplicity, its sensuous fulness, and its passionate appeal, commanding moral impressions for good or evil have to be expected. But enough has been already said upon this topic in another essay. It is more to the present purpose to point out that even those arts which seem most widely removed from life exert their toning influence upon the moral consciousness.

Music, for example, inculcates nothing, tells no story, utters no propositions which provoke assent or dissent. Yet music, in spite of the insidious vagueness of its language, in spite of the fact that its influences are rarely seized or analysed, has a potent charm for tuning our susceptibilities to divers issues. Few of those who have read Plato will dispute what he records about the tonic value of the Dorian mood, as compared with the enervation of the Mixo-Lydian and the frenzy of the Phrygian. To demur that we have only vague notions about the Greek moods avails nothing. A fugue of Bach or the choruses of *Israel in Egypt*, Rossini's melodies and Strauss's valses, the overture to *Tannhäuser* and the pibroch of a Highland clan—such terms of comparison will

suit our purpose just as well as those implied in the obscure phraseology of antique writers on Greek music. Dryden seized the truth and roughly expressed it in his ode for St. Cecilia's Day, styled "Alexander's Feast."

Architecture, again, teaches nothing, tells no story, offers no allurements to the senses, imitates nothing. Such immediate appeals to the sensibilities it leaves to the figurative arts. Yet men and women who are susceptible to their surroundings cannot fail to be toned to different moods, according as they dwell habitually in a Gothic castle, in a Genoese palace, or in a *rococo* villa of the Regency—according as they worship habitually in Chartres Cathedral, in a Jesuit church with its gimcracks, or in an English Methodist chapel with its arid grimness. I admit that it is easy to over-estimate the possible influence of these material environments. Some people seem unimpressible by them. Yet experience leads me to think that there are numerous human beings in each nation who do receive powerful and permanent tone from the impressions communicated to them by architecture.

Something similar to Seneca's remark on landscape and climate holds good here. "Effeminat animos amœnitas nimia, nec dubie aliquid ad corrumpendum vigorem potest regio. Non tantum corpori sed etiam moribus salubrem locum eligere debemus." "Excessive delightfulness emasculates our mental disposition; nor is there any doubt that the place we live in can do something to undermine the vital forces. Not merely for our body, but also for our moral character, we ought to select a wholesome residence."

IV.

The conclusion we thus reach is that if art, on its formal and technical side, partakes of the scientific spirit in all that concerns its mental content and influence upon our nature, it no less certainly partakes of the ethical spirit. Yet art has its privileges and rights and independence. It is not really a

sub-species of Science, nor is it really a sub-species of Ethic. To describe it by such terms would be to strain language and to confuse thought.

All that we are justified in saying on this point is that art cannot ignore morality, any more than it can ignore truth. To claim unqualified independence for it would show a radical misconception of its nature.

It would be still more foolish to maintain that vice is the natural soil of artistic genius, or the manure which stimulates it to productive energy. Owing to the primal cult of beauty, the method of sensuous presentation, and the purpose of communicating pleasure, which we have recognised as proper to art—owing to these conditions of its being, art may indeed appear to have little or nothing to do with virtue; and there have undoubtedly been periods of the world's history when it has flourished in the midst of much licentiousness.

The Italian Renaissance was one of these periods. A thorough-going inquiry into all the aspects of that complex era exposes the historian to misconception. He has to face the reproach of regarding art and beauty as flowers of vice and corruption, simply because he dwells upon the patent fact that Italy reached her highest point of artistic development at a time when political institutions were decaying, social morality was deteriorating, and religious emotions were refrigerating. There is no denying this fact; and in considering the relation of the arts to ethics, it ought to be taken into account. Art of a certain sort can indubitably prosper under conditions which are not favourable to personal or national morality.

Yet, if we look somewhat more narrowly into the factors of this problem, we shall discover that in Italy there existed no causal link between moral enfeeblement and æsthetic vigour. On the contrary, the best work of that brilliant period was accomplished during years which still retained the glow of mediæval faith and the verve of republican enthusiasm.

What survived of force and goodness in the nation, not the insidious encroachments of vice and pusillanimity, enabled painting to flourish between Giotto and Buonarroti. It was the robust science and the desperate patriotism of Machiavelli, not his disbelief in human excellence and his paradoxical conception of political craft, which gave lustre to the "Principe," the "History of Florence," and the "Discourses upon Livy." A little later, Italy, debauched by luxury, degraded in her own eyes by foreign conquest, numbed by the torpor of the Catholic Reaction, ceased to produce even respectable pictures, neglected the culture she had created for Europe, allowed her printing-presses to stand idle, and drowned her literature in floods of academical rhetoric.

In addition to this, signs are not wanting in the Italian art of the Renaissance period which confirm us in believing that great and lasting monuments of human genius imply a sterling moral temper in their makers. After all accounts are reckoned, Dante remains unique among Italians, the one supreme poet of his race. Boccaccio's licentiousness, which leavens and gives form to Renaissance poetry and fiction, condemned that voluminous literature, with the single exception of the "Orlando Furioso," to artistic mediocrity. Not merely because they are immoral, but because they are not really first-rate of their kind, we could afford to abandon the narrative poems and novels of the Renaissance without a sigh. Posterity has already consigned to oblivion the rhetorical compositions of the Humanists, the odes and sonnets of Academical craftsmen. We note with curiosity and wonder that, after Petrarch, few tolerable lyrics were composed by Italians; that the nation proved itself incapable of tragedy; that it could not, in spite of all its efforts, produce an epic. It has been my duty to read thousands of Renaissance compositions, in all kinds of verse; but I would barter the myriad polished lines of Bembo, Molza, Sannazzarro, and the rest of that sort, for a few rough stanzas of Michel Angelo and

Campanella. Why is this? Not because the former are vicious and the latter virtuous; it would indeed be difficult to prove that indictment; but because Michel Angelo and Campanella were men of forcible character, and wrote what is profitable to men in all ages; and of such men there was a lamentable lack in Italy, owing to her ethical deterioration.

So far as it goes, then, the instance of the Italian Renaissance tends to establish the position that noble art is only compatible with sound morality. But there is another point of view from which the seeming paradox of that epoch has to be regarded. Its eminent art was mainly plastic—not literary, but pictorial, sculpturesque, with multiform expansion into minor channels of utility and service, as in house-building, furniture, plate, armour, weapons, woodwork, decorative embroideries, medals, glass, mosaic, enamel, pottery, and so forth. This kind of art, unlike poetry, is only remotely connected with ideas; and the refinement it implies is not inconsistent with barbarity, with profligacy, with political decadence. Granting, then, that the Italians were cruel, cunning, licentious, incapable of warfare, rotten in their public and private morality—ignoring, for the sake of argument, their profound diplomatical ability, their formation of a new intellectual ideal for Europe, their ecclesiastical predominance in the councils of Catholic Christendom, their inauguration of the modern scientific method—riveting our eyes solely on the fact that art flourished among them at a time when social morality, religion, and patriotism had been weakened—we shall not be surprised to find that it was not great poetry, nor yet great literature of any kind, but such plastic art as I have described which rose to the highest eminence among them. I, for one, am unable to believe that the glory of their plastic and technical art, unrivalled as it is in modern days, could have been attained without noble qualities in the nation. It is my deliberate opinion that so vigorous a manifestation of

the human spirit is impossible in wholly somnolent or putrescent stages of the human consciousness. In spite, therefore, of public and private immorality, apparent on the surface of the nation at that period, there must have been present solid and splendid virtues also, if not precisely virtues of the sort which men of our epoch are wont to praise.

When we regard Italian society during the years when this art flourished, we shall find that it lacked cohesion, but that it abounded in salient personalities. It had not the force and toughness of an organised state. On the other hand, it was not animated with a religious enthusiasm, like Islam in its epoch of expansion. Yet it bred individuals of Cellini's stamp, captains like Giovanni de' Medici and the Strozzi, popes of the calibre of Julius II., scholars as world-famous as Poliziano, thinkers like Bruno and Sarpi, despots of the force of Cosimo de' Medici, saint-like souls of the purity of Carlo Borromeo and Filippo Neri, gentlemen fit to rank with Castiglione, well-tempered spirits of the kith of Contarini, free-lances of the intellect as keen as Aretino. It bred them, not singly, but by hundreds. The atmosphere in which thought lived and moved and had its being was aswarm with them. That atmosphere, uncondensed indeed into a fixed and steady medium, but floating, turbid, circumambient, diversified, was precisely what art needs to thrive in. Compare it with the atmosphere of middle-class respectability, of modern conformity to one lax rule of conduct, of the average decency for which contemporary evening papers clamour! It is clear that art, of the sort which the Italians produced, has little chance here. Being bound to present the stuff of human thought and emotion under sensuous forms, seeking ever fresh manifestations for that subject-matter, art flourishes best where the free play of personality is possible.

Not then in vice and immorality (the weakness of the Renaissance), but in unexampled many-sidedness of human character (the strength of that epoch), must we seek the

solution of the problem offered by Italy in the sixteenth century.

In like manner, it was not from the corruption of Athens, from slavery, paiderastia, hetaira-worship, venality, delation, democratic insubordination, that the noble arts and letters of Hellas, the sculpture of Pheidias, the tragedy of Sophocles, the comedy of Aristophanes, the history of Thucydides, the philosophy of Plato emerged. No; but in spite of these things, and regardless of them, from the living well-springs of a highly specialised and powerfully vital human energy, they sprang into imperishable existence.

Let us not deceive ourselves. Art is indissolubly bound up with man's spiritual forces. What we learn from the Italian Renaissance or from the Athens of Socrates is this: that art is able to assert man's moral nature at moments when it seems in other spheres to have been paralysed or vitiated.

REALISM AND IDEALISM.

I.

SOME years ago I visited an exhibition of Italian pictures at Turin. There was not much to arrest attention in the gallery. Yet I remember two small companion panels by the same hand, labelled respectively *L'Ideale* and *Il Reale*. The first of these paintings represented a consumptive, blonde-haired girl of the Teutonic type, in pale drapery, raising her romantic eyes to a watery moonlight sky. She was sitting near a narrow Gothic window, which opened on a garden. From the darkness below sprang cypresses and a tangle of unclassified vegetation in vaporous indistinctness. The second picture introduced the public to a naked woman, flaunting in provocative animalism. She lolled along a bed, with hard light beating on her body, intensified by hangings of a hot red tone. Under the glare of that illumination her flesh shone like copper, smooth as satin ; and the blue-black curls upon her shoulders writhed like snakes.

Both of these pictures were ugly ; but while the Ideal was tamely conceived and feebly executed, the Real displayed enthusiasm, joy in the subject, something of the vigour derived from sympathy and from revolt. The artist had evidently studied this symbolic figure from the life, whereas her foil and pendant, the sentimental maiden, was a figment of his scornful fancy. It seemed clear that he intended to caricature the Ideal, and to record his preference for the Real as men find that in some *mauvais lieu*.

Here, then, was an allegory of the antithesis between Idealism and Realism, as these are vulgarly conceived. Idealism, a mawkish phantasm of hectic virginity, of moonshine, violet-scent, and dewdrops. Realism, a brawny bit of carnal actuality, presented with sensual gusto as the truest truth of life and art.

Is there any solid foundation, I asked myself, for this current conception of the antithesis between the Ideal and Real? Is there at bottom any antagonism between the two terms? Are they not rather correlated and inextricably interwoven both in nature and in art? Suppose we concede for the sake of argument that they may be regarded as exclusive, each of the other, are we therefore to assume that Idealism is moonshiny and insipid, Realism meretricious and revolting? There must surely be some deep misconception of the problem on both sides. Why have the Idealists exposed their principles to such caricature as this by pretending to dispense with nature? Why do the Realists so confidently assert that nothing has truth in it but what is libidinous or ugly, commonplace or vicious?

In the reality of human nature it is certain that beauty and modesty, the chastity of saints and the severe strength of athletes, the manhood of Regulus and the temperance of Hippolytus, are quite as much in their own place as ugliness and impudicity, the licentiousness of harlots and the flaccid feebleness of debauchees, the effeminacy of Heliogabalus and the untempered lusts of Roderigo Borgia. What we call the intellectual and moral attributes of men are no less real than their appetites and physical needs. The harmony of a sane mind in a sane body is as matter-of-fact as the deformity derived from cramping and distorting limitations. All those things, therefore, to which our nature aspires, and which we name ideal, must be the legitimate sphere of a logical and sober Realism. Nay more, it is just these things which are the most real in life, and which realistic art is

consequently bound to represent; for they are the source of strength, and permanence, and progress to the species. Science teaches us convincingly that the superiority of each race in the struggle for existence consists precisely in its aptitude for the development of virtues. Badness, in one word, is less real than goodness.

Realism dares not separate itself from the Ideal, because the Ideal is a permanent factor, and the most important factor, in the reality of life. The Ideal is the manifestation of consciousness to itself, the pledge to the race of our existing in a process of development. Evolution shows that life is in continual progress; and progress from one point to another implies (in a highly complex animal like man) the sense of a better to which the being tends; in other words, involves Idealism. How can the realistic artist afford then to exclude so weighty and indestructible an element of his main subject-matter? What indeed has he to do but to seek out and represent the whole reality of human nature, extenuating nothing, setting nothing down in malice? His object is to reach and to express the truth. He may not shirk what is ugly and animal in his fellow-creatures. But he ought not to dote upon these points. Far less ought he to repudiate those select qualities which men in their long struggle with themselves and their environment have gained as the most precious spoils of a continued battle.

Furthermore, it is worth considering whether the artist, if he dares and wishes to escape from Idealism, is able to do so. I am convinced that he cannot, and this conviction emboldens me to attempt once more the treatment of a threadbare problem.

II.

He must indeed be a bold man who invites the world to listen while he talks about Idealism and Realism. The very

terms have an obsolete scholastic flavour, like those famous hobby-horses of the metaphysicians, Subject and Object. Worse even: they suggest the impostures of æsthetic coteries, the sermonising of self-consecrated priests concerning mysteries no mind has clearly grasped. Plain people are not unjustified in turning from such discussions with a shrug of the shoulders and a yawn.

And yet there still remains something to be studied in this hackneyed antithesis. Just as Subject and Object stand for moments in our apperception of the universe, so the Ideal and the Real indicate conditions under which the arts fulfil their function. It is not therefore a hopeless task, though it may demand a sanguine spirit, to throw light upon the correlation of these terms.

I shall attempt to demonstrate that the warfare waged about them in æsthetic schools arises from a false conception of their mutual relations. In the philosophy of Being, Subject and Object are posed as antithetical only to be resumed as the conditions of experience. Even so Idealism and Realism, in the philosophy of Art, denote an antagonism which is more apparent than actual, and upon the resolution of which in practice excellence depends. Both, in fact, and both together, are present in every effort which we make to reproduce and represent the outer world through art.

In order to gain limitations for the treatment of this topic, I shall here confine myself to Sculpture and Painting. The principles arrived at will be found applicable in some measure to literature. But music and architecture, as is manifest, do not fall immediately within the sphere of these ideas.

Realism, to begin with, forms the substratum and indispensable condition of all figurative art. The very name figurative, which we apply to Sculpture and Painting, indicates that these arts proceed by imitation of external objects, and mainly by imitation of the human form. Now

it would be absurd to contend that imitation is the worse for being veracious, the worse for recalling to our minds the imitated thing, or in other words, for being in the right sense realistic. Nobody wants a portrait which is not as precisely like the person represented, as exactly true to that person's entire self, as it can possibly be made. We may want something else besides; but we demand resemblance as an indispensable quality. Nobody again wants the image of a god or saint which is not as accurately adequate to the human form in which that godhead or that sanctity might have resided, as knowledge and skill can make it. Whatever else we desire of the image, we shall not think the better of it for being anatomically wrong. In other words, the figurative arts, by the law which makes them imitate, are bound at every step of their progress to be realistic. The painter must depict each object with painstaking attention to its details. He must aim at delineating the caper and the columbine as faithfully as Titian did, armour as accurately as Giorgione, pearls and brocade with the fidelity of John Van Eyck, hands with the subtlety of Lionardo da Vinci, faces with the earnest feeling after character displayed in Raphael's Leo or Velasquez' Philip.

This is the beginning of his task. But he very soon discovers that he cannot imitate things exactly as they are in fact. The reason of this is that the eye and the hand of sculptor or painter are not a photographic camera. They have neither the qualities nor the defects of a machine. In every imitative effort, worthy of the name of art, the human mind has intervened. What is more, this mind has been the mind of an individual, with specific aptitudes for observation, with specific predilections, with certain ways of thinking, seeing, feeling, and selecting, peculiar to himself. No human mind can grasp unmixed reality, except in the sphere of mathematics. No two men see the same woman or the same tree. Our impressions and perceptions are

necessarily coloured by those qualities which make us percipient and impressible individualities, differing each from his neighbour in a thousand minute particulars.

It is precisely at this point, at the very earliest attempt to imitate, that Idealism enters simultaneously with Realism into the arts. The simplest as well as the most complex work contains this element of ideality. For when a man reproduces in art what he sees in nature, he inevitably imports himself into the product. Thus the object and the idea exist as twin-born factors in the merest rough sketch pencilled on a scrap of paper. Strive as he will to keep himself out of the imitation, the man is powerless to do so. The thing imitated has of necessity become the thing imagined, by the act of his transferring its outline to paper.

We may properly compare chiaroscuro drawings with photographs, since in each case the result is a reproduction of form under certain conditions of light and shade without colour. Now, given the same advantage of illumination, chemicals, exposure, and so forth, twenty photographic cameras of equal dimensions and equal excellence will produce almost identical representations of a single model. But set twenty artists of equal skill in draughtsmanship to make studies from one model, then, though the imitation may in each case be equally faithful, there will be a different intellectual quality, a different spiritual touch, a different appeal to sympathy, a different order of suggestion in each of the twenty drawings. In other words, each of the twenty drawings represents the thing perceived and conceived differently by each of the twenty draughtsmen. Some specific ideality has formed an unavoidable feature of each artist's work, while all have aimed, in like manner, at merely reproducing the object before them.

This is perhaps the simplest way of presenting the truth that Realism and Idealism are as inseparable as body and soul in every product of the figurative arts. In art it is not

a machine but a mind which imitates. Nay, even the hand which draws is itself no mechanical instrument, but part of a living organism, penetrated with intellectual vitality, instinct with ideas. No draughtsman can rival the camera in bare accuracy ; but every draughtsman is bound to do what the camera cannot do, by introducing a subjective quality into the reproduction.

It will be convenient to put this point in a slightly different way. When we analyse what goes to the production of a work of art, we find, upon the one hand, an act of mental intuition into the object which has to be represented, whereby the nature of that object is imaginatively grasped. Upon the other hand, we find that certain materials and processes have been employed with more or less technical dexterity, as marble, clay, wood, metal, colour upon canvas, colour upon lime-surface, copper-plate bitten by burin and acid, and the like. These materials and processes, forming the technical part of art-production, are symbols, much in the same sense as words are symbols, for externalising a mental conception of the object. They differ, indeed, from words, inasmuch as the object to be represented is itself solid, and marble is solid ; or is coloured, and the pigments on the painter's palette are coloured ; or has a defined outline, with appreciable relations of light to darkness, and an etching presents this outline with similar relations of light to darkness. In fact, the symbols of the figurative arts differ from the symbols used by poetry, in this : that they are able to match or imitate certain salient qualities in the object. Yet it is clear that they are recognised as symbols, and that an exact copy of the object is not the end of figurative art. If this were the end, the most artistic portrait of a lady would be a carefully modelled wax-figure, coloured to imitate her complexion, with glass eyes of the right shade, artificial teeth, and a wig of real hair, the whole attired in a suit of her own clothes. And even then we should not have got rid of symbolism ; for wax and colour

are not flesh, glass eyes cannot contract their iris, nor does any wig, however deftly made, spring from the forehead or curl about the nape like living hair. Having then admitted that all art, however apparently imitative, is symbolic, and that it symbolises a conception formed of some external object in the artist's mind, we are able to perceive that the result will be more idealistic, or more realistic, according to the bent of the man's sympathy with nature, according to his choice of materials and processes, and, lastly, according to his method of employing these technical symbols. If, like the pedlar in Wordsworth's "Peter Bell,"

> A primrose by a river's brim,
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more,

then his picture of the primrose will be prosaically accurate. It will be a botanical diagram, and its artistic value will consist in the delicacy of draughtsmanship, the accuracy of colouring, whereby some particular primrose has been represented. If, on the other hand, he views things like the poet in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*,[1] if

> He will watch from dawn till gloom
> The lake-reflected sun illume
> The yellow bees in the ivy bloom,
> Nor heed, nor see what things they be,
> But from these create he can
> Forms more real than living man,
> Nurslings of immortality,

then his picture of the same primrose will result in a piece of pure fancy, the chalice of a yellow flower exhaling some aërial sylph, like those in William Blake's floral decorations. These are extreme instances; yet the rhythm of figurative symbolism, even in the case of a primrose, passes from botanical diagrams through William Hunt's exquisite portraits to Blake's fairies. Look at the same matter from the point of view, not of ima-

[1] I allude to the well-known lines, beginning:

> On a poet's lips I slept . . .

ginative insight, but of technical process. Should the artist have a certain landscape in his mind, and should he choose etching as the medium for its representation, he renounces the larger part of those symbols which appeal immediately to the senses. Colour is abstracted; nothing remains but tone and outline, and even these have to be imaginatively employed for purposes of pure suggestion, since it is impossible in any etching to obtain the correct values of light and dark in nature. If, on the other hand, he works upon a large canvas in oils, with all the pigments furnished by the colourman, he aims at a more obviously imitative result. Yet he is still dealing with symbols. He cannot get the whole light or the whole dark of nature. He must manipulate, economise, and conventionalise the hues of the scene before him. An etching seems thus, by the qualities of the process, to be more idealistic; an oil picture, by its qualities, seems to be more realistic. In other words, the essential symbolism of figurative art is forced more obviously upon our attention by the former than by the latter. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that what we mean by Realism is the technical side of art, and what we mean by Idealism is the imaginative side. A work of art, patient and flawless in its technical execution, may at the same time be highly idealistic.[1] Conversely, a slovenly and ignorant piece of technical workmanship may have no imaginative qualities to recommend it.[2] The truth to remember is that, whatever process the figurative artist uses, and however ably he employs his symbols, he cannot remain a merely faithful copyist. Even the most prosaic or wilfully imitative craftsman adds something of his own imagination to the copy he produces, and is thwarted in any attempt to avoid this necessity by the fact that he has only symbols to deal with, and his individual perceptive faculty to see by.

[1] Such work was that of Giàn Bellini in his Madonna at the Frari.

[2] Such work was that of Giorgio Vasari in his frescoes on the Cupola of the Duomo at Florence.

III.

We must not pause here in our analysis of what the draughtsman brings of ideality to his work. I have tried to show that the bare attempt by a human being to imitate what he sees before him introduces of necessity the element of mind into his transcript from nature. But no human being stands alone in this world. His own particular mental quality is influenced by the thought of his race and epoch. The intellectual atmosphere in which he lives determines him. He cannot help being to some extent the creature of his age, the child of antecedent ages. Thus, in addition to the specific quality introduced by the artist into his imitation of an object, there are universal mental elements, tending towards idealism, which affect the whole function of art in each race and each epoch. Should sculptor or painter try to be merely imitative, crudely realistic, he cannot succeed so well as the photographic camera does. Should he never so obstinately cling to the *art for art* principle, he cannot avoid suggesting thoughts —good, bad, or indifferent, noble or ignoble, pure or foul— through the form his thinking brain and intelligent fingers have evolved from studies of reality. Moreover, artists, their works, and the people who survey their works, are environed by a common atmosphere of ideas, which makes an art devoid of ideality impossible. In art spirit communicates with spirit, the spirit of the artist with the spirit of the spectator.

The demonstration of this deep-seated bond between Idealism and Realism is so important that I must once more approach it from a somewhat different point of view. Twenty draughtsmen, we have seen, will not imitate the same object with the same identity of result as twenty photographic cameras. The draughtsman cannot be so literally realistic as the machine; he is bound to modify his reproduction of the object by some note indicative of his

own mental and moral nature. He will not rival the machine in accuracy; but he cannot avoid adding something which the machine is powerless to give. It is precisely by emphasizing this quality which differentiates the draughtsman from the machine, that the arts arrive at Idealism. Art supplements its mechanical deficiencies, and exerts the specific faculties of human beings by seeking after beauty and by aiming at the expression of thought. It deliberately cultivates the subjective element which is inevitably present in every reproduction of an object by the human brain and hand. In acting thus it utilises what might be described as man's inferiority to a machine in graphic accuracy, while it exercises man's superiority to the machine in power of intellectual suggestion. To turn defects into forces by the exertion of mind is the privilege which man possesses, rendering him the lord over brutes and the controller of mechanical instruments. So Idealism in art is the ultimate elaboration of that comparative inaccuracy and that imported subjective quality, both of which distinguish the most literal drawing from a photograph.

Artistic beauty is mainly a matter of selection, due to the exercise of those free mental faculties which the machine lacks. The sculptor or the painter observes defects in the single model; he notices in many models scattered excellences; he has before him the most perfect forms invented by his predecessors. To correct those defects, to reunite those excellences, to apply the principles of those perfected types, becomes his aim. He cannot rival Nature by producing anything exactly like her work, but he can create something which shall show what Nature strives after. Βούλεται μὲν ἀλλ' οὐ δύναται, wrote Aristotle about Nature; "she has the will but not the power to realise perfection." The mind of man comprehends her effort, and though the skill of man cannot compete with her in the production of particulars, he is able by art to anticipate her desires,

and to exhibit an image of what she was intending. As Tennyson wrote in "The Two Voices":

> That type of perfect in his mind
> Can he in Nature nowhere find.

This, at least, is how the matter *appears* to man; although it can hardly be doubted that Nature in her entirety is more perfect than our imagination, could man but attain to full and sympathetic comprehension of the universal scheme. Perhaps it may be a defect in our perceptive faculty which makes us discern and seek to remedy defect in nature. Perhaps the truth may be that man's intelligence, being at present the highest known thing in the universe, apprehends the relative inferiority of things below it in the scale of being. Anyhow, the fact remains that we can observe and correct ideally many blemishes in natural objects —as, for example, a thick ankle or a disproportioned leg, the squint in the eyes of an otherwise symmetrical face, a hare-lip, an unwieldy branch in some fine oak, an ungraceful combination of lines in a mountain landscape. It is clearly not the artist's duty to copy these apparent defects in the object because they occur in nature, when his faculty of generalisation enables him to rectify them by the analogy of other objects in nature which are to us more pleasing, and which more completely realise "that type of perfect" existing in our intelligence. It is the same with ugliness as with what we call sin, evil, pain, disease. All of these qualities seem to us imperfections, and we are justified in attempting to remove ugliness from the æsthetic sphere, sin from the moral, pain and disease from the physical. Yet those who believe that the universe, as at present constituted, is in some inexplicable way a manifestation of immanent divinity, must incline to the belief that all evil, including ugliness, is only in appearance, and, as the Greeks said, "to us."

All nature is but art unknown to thee ;
All chance, direction which thou canst not see ;
All discord, harmony not understood ;
All partial evil, universal good.

Such optimism, indeed, is not so unscientific as it looks. Science in its most philosophical form introduces a spirituality into our conceptions of the world, whereby we are being brought back on surer paths to the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius or to the Theism of Bolingbroke and Pope. The fact, however, remains that, with our present partial knowledge of the universe, ugliness, sin, pain, disease, all of which are incontestably present in nature, contradict what we believe to be the best part of ourselves, our mental imagination of perfection.

"To disengage the elements of beauty," says Sainte-Beuve ; "To escape from the mere frightful reality," says Joubert. That is the function of the arts. Reality, however, is never, in a true sense, frightful. Reality is always the sole sound schoolmaster which brings us to a sense of ideal beauty. Sculptor and painter are indeed bound to pass beyond the model. They cannot, as I go on reiterating, even if they would, abide by it as the camera or the plaster cast does. The mere touch of the brush or the chisel, of "the hand which obeys the intellect," prevents that. What they can do, and what a mechanical process cannot do, is to *interpret* it ; not to contradict it ; nay, rather to obey its leading ; but to supplement its shortcomings, to elucidate its latent suggestions of significance and loveliness. They do not aim at producing a mere bare copy of their subject at some accidental moment, for they know that the thing itself is better than such a copy would be. They attempt to seize and reveal its character at the very best, to represent what it strives to be, to express its truest truth, not what is transitory and conditioned by circumstance, but what is permanent and freed from limitations in it.

The figurative arts are thus led to what is after all their highest function, the presentation of thought and feeling in beautiful form. Statues and pictures must fall short of life in flesh and blood reality. But these same works of human industry can transfigure particular realities by infusing into them the elements of generalisation, selection, interpretative insight. These elements, in the language of discredited schools, are expression and idealisation. According to the demonstration I have attempted in this essay, they may be better described as the final outcome of those qualities—partly defect of mechanical accuracy, partly addition of mental sensibility—which distinguish a drawing from a cast or photograph. They are the deliberate elaboration of the subjective ingredient which is found in every imitation by the hand of man.

IV.

Figurative art, in its most vital epochs, lent itself to the expression of religious ideas. The artist had to find corporeal investiture for the generalised and divinised qualities of human nature. Such exact corporeal investiture for a spiritual type of human energy or passion is rarely, if ever, offered by a single living person. Who, for example, has seen a man or woman of whom he could say, "There goes Zeus," or, "There goes Aphrodite"? What we do say is rather, "Majestic as Zeus, beautiful as Aphrodite." In other words, the living person suggests hints to the artist for working out "that type of perfect in his mind." The artist, then, is compelled to create a body for the idea he has to express; more majestic or more beautiful than any single body he has ever seen; more completely adequate to the idea; more thoroughly penetrated with the specific qualities of the spiritual type in all its parts. At the same time this form must not, at any point, be discordant with the structure of the human body as he learns to know it from his models.

It must, on the contrary, be most faithful to those models, enhancing and accentuating their suggestions, interpreting with loyal conscientiousness nature's effort to effectuate perfection. Here at last we touch Idealism in its essence. But such Idealism, when sound and healthy, is only Realism in the intensest phase of veracity; it is truth quintessenced and raised to the highest power. Such is the ultimate expansion of those factors which we found to be co-existent in the simplest sketch from nature.

In the right understanding of this correlation between Realism and Idealism the Greek sculptors are our surest teachers. It was incumbent upon them to create images of gods and goddesses and heroes, each of whom represented in perfection some one psychological attribute of human nature. For these spiritual essences they were bound to find fit incarnation through the means available by art. They therefore always had before their minds the problem how to invest such isolated attributes with appropriate forms—how to fashion a Zeus who should be all-majestic, a Herakles who should be strength personified, an Aphrodite who should be the consummation of feminine attractiveness, a Faun who should be light and active as the creatures of the woodland without ceasing to be man in shape. The solution of this problem forced them to idealise, while their exquisite sense for the beauty, grace, and dignity of the living model kept them realistically faithful to minutest facts in nature.

In order to illustrate how the best Greek work exhibits that right blending of the ideal with the real, on which I am insisting, I will quote a passage from Haydon's autobiography, which records the impression made upon his mind by the first sight of the Elgin marbles. It must be remembered that Haydon grew up in England at a time when Reynolds, Fuseli, and West had saturated the art schools with false doctrine about "the beau-ideal," "the grand style," "the superiority of art to nature." Haydon, though he never

worked out the problems of design successfully in his own practice, was convinced that Realism, or truth to actual fact, formed the only solid basis for sculpture and painting. Consequently, when he found the closest observation of nature combined with the loftiest heroic style in the fragments of the Parthenon, these had for him authentic inspiration ; they delivered him from what was specious and misleading in the Idealism of his epoch; they confirmed him in his own instinctive belief that genuine grandeur was not only compatible with the most painstaking imitation of the model, but that such devotion to the truth of nature formed an indispensable condition of masterly creative work. Here was an apocalypse of the right method for all art and in all ages. Here was a demonstration of the indissoluble and organic link between the sublimest Idealism and the humblest Realism.

There is so much of a curious sort of pathos, combined with so much of passionate and sudden enthusiasm, in Haydon's narrative, that I venture to reproduce a large portion of it textually. It should not be forgotten that to this man, in no small measure, English people owe the presence in their midst of these Parthenon sculptures, and all that flows therefrom for better or for worse :

"To Park Lane then we went, and after passing through the hall and thence into an open yard, entered a damp, dirty pen-house, where lay the marbles ranged within sight and reach.

"The first thing I fixed my eyes on was the wrist of a figure in one of the female groups, in which were visible, though in a feminine form, the radius and ulna. I was astonished, for I had never seen them hinted at in any female wrist in the antique. I darted my eye to the elbow, and saw the outer condyle visibly affecting the shape as in nature. I saw that the arm was in repose and the soft parts in relaxation. That combination of nature and idea which I had felt was so much wanting for high art was here displayed to midday conviction. My heart beat ! If I had seen nothing else, I had beheld enough to keep me to nature for the rest of my life. But when I turned to the Theseus and saw that every form was altered by action or repose—when I saw that the two sides of his back varied, one side stretched from the shoulder-blade being pulled forward, and the other side compressed from the shoulder-blade being

pushed close to the spine as he rested on his elbow, with the belly flat, because the bowels fell into the pelvis as he sat—and when, turning to the Ilissus, I saw the belly protruded from the figure lying on its side—and again when in the figure of the fighting Metope I saw the muscle shown under the arm-pit in that instantaneous action of darting out, and left out in the other arm-pits because not wanted—when I saw, in fact, the most heroic style combined with all the essential detail of actual life, the thing was done at once and for ever. . . . . I felt as if a divine truth had blazed inwardly upon my mind, and I knew that they (the marbles) would at last rouse the art of Europe from its slumber in the darkness."

V.

At this point it is necessary, for the sake of clearness, to attempt the definition of Realism and Idealism. We have already learned that every work of figurative art contains both elements, whether this be a simple pencil-drawing from a single model, or a composition so complex as the friezes of the Parthenon. Yet it is obvious that the artist may lean more to one side than the other. He may choose to concentrate his powers upon the literal imitation of objects rather than upon the development of subjective qualities. Or, on the other hand, he may devote his whole attention to the refinement of an intellectual type of beauty or to the expression of thoughts, remaining content with slovenly execution and feeble grasp on fact. At one period of art, and in one school, tendencies in favour of crude Realism will prevail; at another time, or in another region, the bias will be toward unsubstantial Idealism. We cannot always expect that perfect synthesis which makes the work of Pheidias exemplary. It is therefore profitable to define the two factors which are for ever being brought by the practice of art into more or less complete accord.

Realism is the presentation of natural objects as the artist sees them, as he thinks they are. It is the attempt to imitate things as they strike the senses.

Idealism is the presentation of natural objects as the artist

fain would see them, as he thinks they strive to be. It is the attempt to imitate things as the mind interprets them.

I may pause to remark, that the distinction implied in these definitions is as old as Aristotle. In the Poetics we read: "Sophocles used to say that he depicted men as they ought to be, Euripides as they are." In other words, Sophocles regarded himself as an idealist, Euripides as a realist. Again: "Polygnotus painted men better than they are, Pauson worse than they are, Dionysius as they are." In other words, Polygnotus was an idealist, Pauson a caricaturist, Dionysius a realist. Once again, speaking more generally of painters, Aristotle gives a clear account of idealists: "While making men like men they paint them fairer."[1]

Now this distinction, which is based upon the fundamental properties of human as distinguished from mechanical imitation, has been fruitful of results both in the practice and the theory of the art. Draughtsmen very soon discover that they cannot wholly eliminate an idealistic or subjective element from their work; but they are able either to keep this in abeyance or to emphasize it. They can swerve more to the side of literal delineation, or more to the side of imaginative selection. Theorists and writers upon art, noticing this power of choice, have divided into hostile camps; and the doctrines of the schools have reacted upon practice. Notwithstanding the impossibility of separating the twin-born factors of every human imitative product, antagonistic standards of the Real and the Ideal came thus into existence. The warfare of opinion on this crucial point diverts practical artists from consistently aiming at that just balance between the careful study of nature and the effort to interpret nature, which is the mark of supreme art.

I will illustrate my meaning by referring to European art in the last three centuries. When sculpture and painting

[1] These passages will be found in cap. xxvi. and cap. ii.

declined in Italy, after the death of Michel Angelo, artists began to withdraw from the study of life. Theories were promulgated to the effect that nature hampers the freedom of genius, and obscures the inspiration which illuminates the artist's soul. It was maintained that he ought only to know so much of nature as would save his work from monstrosity. He was told that art bettered nature, and that the painstaking imitation of details lowered style. This led to superficial, slovenly, conceited compositions being palmed off as sublime. The frigid abstractions of the Bolognese Eclectics passed for heroic, because they avoided literal painstaking transcripts from reality. The doctrine of the *beau ideal* was preached in France. Sir Joshua Reynolds dilated on the Grand Style. David, with his pseudo-classicism, imposed on Paris as the reviver of the Greek manner. West in England, vacuous and feeble, took rank among the great religious painters. A spurious Idealism reigned supreme ; and through the starvation of her twin-sister Realism, art fell into decay.

A reaction was necessitated. The world had been filled with manneristic technicalities and with shallow academical pomposities—with ideal figures, ideal faces, ideal draperies, ideal landscapes, ideal trees, which were only ideal because they resembled nothing real precisely. The reaction assumed many forms ; it showed itself earliest in a revived admiration for Dutch painting and in the English school of landscape ; it took definite shape in the Romanticists of France and Germany and in the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood of England. But that which principally concerns us here is its final manifestation in what is now called Realism. This, of a truth, is rather a phase of literature than of figurative art ; yet it may be studied in contemporary sculpture and painting no less than in poetry and fiction.

Realism, being a revolt against the false principles of that phthisical Idealism which claimed the empire in despite of Nature, has attached itself to the ugly, the commonplace, the

vicious in human existence; it has set its face steadily against selection and interpretation; it has striven to represent things merely as they are, and not the best things.

In so doing the Realists have chosen an illogical and untenable position; for nothing is more manifest than that beauty is as real as ugliness, purity as obscenity, virtue as vice, health and harmony as disease and discord. Indeed, as I have remarked above, the whole history of the world proves that the good possesses more of reality, more of permanence, than the bad. Reactions and revolutions, however, are never just. And thus it is with contemporary Realism. Conscious that Idealism, in the effete forms of the last century, was a sham—conscious that this impostor claimed the monopoly of beauty, purity, virtue, harmony—the reactionaries studied reality where it is most painfully apparent and least capable of being confounded with the idealistic object of their hatred. They chose the sphere of vulgarity and pathology as though this were eminently real. Philosophers, meanwhile, can welcome even Zola's *Nana* for the sake of its reactionary force. We know that the pendulum must swing back from that extreme point. The arts are bound to recognise the truth that it is not their duty and their glory to represent deformity. But the arts will have been the better for those drastic studies which force them to face their problem in its crudest shape.

Resuming what I have attempted to establish, we find in the art-history of the present century a false Idealism superseded by a false Realism. Both are false, because neither recognises the correlation of these elements, which, in the work of Pheidias, we have seen to be supremely harmonised. The idealist sought to dispense with the necessary interrogation of nature; the realist seeks to ignore the fact that art must aim at selection and must disengage the elements of beauty inherent in nature. The one regarded man's incapacity to rival a machine with pride, and deemed his power

of independent imagination sufficient for itself. The other, indignant at the miserable consequences of such arrogance, strives to reduce man's mind, so far as possible, to the condition of an imitative machine.[1]

Meanwhile, this uncompromising Realism is by no means the most hopeful or the most prominent feature in the art of our age. On various lines, in many divers ways, since the reaction against false Idealism set in, have attempts been made to solve the problem of combining the twin factors in a due and vital correlation. Together with improved conditions of study in our art-schools, the attention paid to the monuments of Sculpture and Painting in their best periods (Hellenic, mediæval, early Italian, Flemish, French) has been progressively helpful; while no one can exaggerate the importance of such moral teaching as Mr. Ruskin gives so copiously to the student.

The task of forming a noble style is one of peculiar difficulty under the conditions of our epoch, because the arts have no longer a sphere of thoughts to work in, which stimulates the exercise of the highest imaginative faculties. We saw how Greek sculptors were compelled to idealise by their obligation to incarnate the Olympian divinities, and how at the same time their exquisite feeling for nature kept them within the limits of sober realistic truth. Like them, the earlier Italian painters dealt with the mythology of an anthropomorphic religion; their task was only a trifle less favourable to the right elucidation of the ideal from the real than was that of Pheidias. But we live at a period when theistic conceptions, or, in other words, the most deeply-penetrating and universally-accepted thoughts of the race, no longer lend themselves to æsthetic presentation. They have grown too rarefied, too abstract, too purely intellectual, for adequate treatment by the figurative artist. In the place of

[1] Many writers of fiction appear, in their dialogue, to be vainly competing with the phonograph.

Hellenic myth and Christian legend, the vast scientific theory of the Cosmos has arisen, itself pregnant with a new metaphysic and a new theology, but as yet imperfectly appropriated and ill-adapted to the plastic presentation of its fundamental ideas. Science, moreover, has made one fact manifest, that the more we come to know instead of dreaming about things, the less can we tolerate to have those things misrepresented in accordance with some whimsical or obsolescent fancy. Science has rendered our sense of veracity acute. Under its influence we tend to become positive, shy of anything which seems untrue to fact, intolerant of a merely allegorical use of known things to express visions however beautiful, or aspirations however honourable. We require the *vraie vérité* so far as we can get it. Art, obliged to obey the mental stress of the epoch, deprived of a widely-accepted body of sensuous religious thoughts, leans of necessity more to Realism than it did in the Athens of Pericles or in the Florence of Lorenzo de' Medici.

On a future occasion I hope to return to this subject, and to point out those elements of ideality in modern life and thought, which lie ready to the uses of the arts, and on which the arts have already seized with profit.

THE MODEL.

I.

I ATTEMPTED in the preceding essay to show that figurative art implies a certain relation between realism and idealism, which varies according to the volition of the artist. In other words, the artist cannot avoid modifying his imitation of the chosen object by the infusion of his own subjective quality; but he is at liberty to reduce this subjective element to a minimum, or, on the other hand, to regard it as his chief concern.

Human art is unable to reproduce nature, except upon such terms as these. It cannot draw as accurately as the sun does by means of the photographic camera. It cannot render dialogue with the fidelity of a phonograph. At the same time it is obliged to import something which external nature does not possess, something which belongs exclusively to the spirit of man, in all its transcripts from the world around us.

To say that art is superior to nature would be an impertinence. Yet art has a sphere separate from and beyond nature, which belongs to ideas, to emotions, to sentiments, to the region of the human spirit. This sphere is not alien to nature: indeed it is the highest thing known to us in the universe; being, as it is, the specific property of man, who is himself a part of nature.

II.

Those who have attentively studied a fine nude model, observing the gradations of colour, the play of light and shade and shadow upon the surface of the flesh, attending to the intricate details of muscular and bony structure thus revealed, marking the thrill of life in pulse and respiration and slight alterations of attitude, such students will perforce concede that no drawing, whether it be by the hand of Lionardo da Vinci or of Ingres, can bear comparison with the living miracle displayed before them. In so far as the drawing conscientiously portrays the model, it calls forth admiration by its exhibition of the draughtsman's skill; it instructs a learner by the revelation of his method. Yet it remains a poor and feeble shadow of the truth. Art, we say, is immeasurably below fact, so long as it attempts to rival the glow and richness of the living man by its mere shadow-scheme of imitation.

In a second degree such drawings are inferior to really careful photographs from the nude. I have before me a reproduction of the celebrated study of two naked men, which Raphael sent as a specimen of his skill to Albert Dürer, and also a photograph from a model in almost exactly the same position as one of Raphael's figures.[1] The model in my photograph is somewhat coarse and vulgar. Yet no one, on comparing these two forms (the crayon study and the photograph), can fail, I think, to acknowledge the superiority of the more literal transcript from nature. Cunning as was Raphael's craft, there is slovenly drawing in the hands and feet, exaggerated markings in the knee-joints, unmeaning salience of

[1] Raphael's drawing (in the Albertina collection, at Vienna, I believe) is inscribed by Dürer: "1515. Raffahill di Urbin der so hoch beim Pabst geacht ist gewest hat die hat diese nacken bild gemacht und hat sy dem Albrecht Dürer gen Nurnberg geschiecht um sein Hand zu weisen." The photograph of the model is one issued in Vienna for the use of art-students.

muscle on the back, and a too violent curve in the outline of the belly. The sun drew better than Raphael: and the photograph of this common model is more delightful to look at, because more adequate to the infinite subtlety of nature, than the masterpiece of the great draughtsman of Urbino. Every detail of the body here is right, and in right relation to the whole; every sinew explains itself without effort and without emphasis; and the ripple of light and shade over the whole flesh surface exhibits vital energy in a way which no work of art has ever done.

It will, however, be objected that to contrast a chalk drawing with a photograph from nature is not fair. The former must always, to some extent, resemble a diagram, while the latter represents at least the fulness and completeness of life. I therefore pass on to a third degree of comparison; and for this purpose I will select companion reproductions by photography of Flandrin's famous study in the Luxembourg and of a living model in the same attitude.[1] (Flandrin's picture, it will be remembered, represents a young man seated naked on a rock above the sea, with a craggy line of coast in the far distance. His legs are gathered up to the belly, and clasped with both hands above the ankles; his head is bent upon the knees, so that nothing of the facial expression is visible.) Any unfairness in this comparison will certainly be to the injury of the model; for Flandrin's picture has all the advantage of the most consummate brush-work, and of the most careful attention to light and shade upon flesh surfaces. It is in fact an elaborate oil-painting of high technical excellence and elevated style. My photograph from the model is a comparatively poor one; the subject has not been selected with care, and the print is flat. Yet I learn from it innumerable niceties which Flandrin has not worked

[1] The Autotype Company sells an admirable carbon photograph of Flandrin's picture. The photograph of the model is from the series issued for art-students at Vienna, mentioned in a note above.

out—something about the spring and strain of tendons in the wrist and forearm where the hand is clasped ; something about the wrinkles in the belly caused by the forward bending of the back ; something about the prolongation of the muscles of the pleura due to the stretching of the arm in that position. The model, moreover, is most interesting, more rich in suggestions of vital energy and movement. From the point of view of uncompromising realism, there can be no doubt which is the more satisfactory performance. The photograph of the model is second, the photograph of the picture is third, in its remove from nature, from reality, from truth. If the aim of art be to render a literal image of the object, then the art of the camera in this competition bears away the palm.

Nevertheless there is equally no doubt that Flandrin's study is a painted poem, while the photograph of the nude model is only what one may see any morning if one gets a well-made youth to strip and pose.

What then gives Flandrin's picture its value as an artistic product, as a painted poem ? It tells no story, has no obvious intention ; the painter clearly meant it to be as perfect a transcript from the nude, as near to the *vraie vérité* of nature, as he could make it. The answer is that, although he may not have sought to idealise, although he did not seek to express a definite thought, his picture is penetrated with spiritual quality. In passing through the artist's mind, this form of a mere model has been transfigured. While it has lost something of the vivacity and salient truth of nature, it has acquired permanence, dignity, repose, elevation. It has become "a thing of beauty, a joy for ever," in a sense in which no living person, however far more attractive, more interesting, more multiformly charming, can be described by these terms.

III.

Art will never match the infinite variety and subtlety of nature; no drawing or painting will equal the primary beauties of the living model. We cannot paint a tree as lovely as the tree upon the field in sunlight is. We cannot carve a naked man as wonderful as the youth stripped there upon the river's bank before his plunge into the water. Therefore the thorough-going Realist ought frankly to abandon figurative art, and to content his soul with the exhibition and contemplation of actual nature. This, however, is not the conclusion to which our argument leads; for after we have admitted the relative inferiority of art to nature, we know that art has qualities, all of them derived from the intellectual, selective, imaginative faculties of man, which more than justify its existence.

The brain, by interposing its activity in however slight a degree between the object and the representation, is bound to interpret, and in so far to idealise. The primary reality of the model, the secondary reality of the photographic portrait, are exchanged for reality as the artist's mind and heart have conceived it. Thus what a man sees and feels in the world around him, what he selects from it, and how he presents it, constitute the *differentia* of art. He may falsify or faithfully report, elevate or degrade, eliminate the purest form from nature, or produce a grotesque satire of her most beautiful creations. This intervention of the artist's mind between the object and the figured representation makes him an interpreter; it invests all works of art with some mood, some tone, some suggestion of human thought and emotion. And whether this intervention be voluntary or involuntary matters little. The point to fix on is that the artist's mind cannot be inoperative in the processes of art. The imported element of subjectivity will be definite or vague, according to the intensity of the artist's character,

and according to the amount of purpose or conviction which he felt while working; it will be genial or repellent, tender or austere, humane or barbarous, depraving or ennobling, chaste or licentious, sensual or spiritual, according to the bias of his temperament.

Now it is just this intervention of a thinking, feeling subjectivity which makes Flandrin's study of the young man alone upon the rock a painted poem. We may not, while looking at this picture, be quite sure what the meaning of the poem is: different minds, as in the case of musical melody, will be affected by it in divers ways. To me, for instance, the picture suggests resignation, the mystery of fate, the calm of acquiescence. The ocean which surrounds that solitary form, and the distant coast-line, add undoubtedly to an imaginative impression of the sort I have described. These accessories are absent in the photograph of the model, which only suggests the interior of a studio. In so far, therefore, as they contribute to the total effect of Flandrin's picture, the mere model is at a palpable disadvantage. Yet we might transfer the model to a real rock, with the same scene of sea and coast painted behind him for a background; or better, we might place him in a position on some spur of Capri's promontories with the Sorrentine headland for background; but in neither case should we obtain the result achieved by Flandrin. A photograph from the model in these circumstances would not influence our mind in the same manner. The beauty of the study might be even greater; the truth to fact, to nature's infinite variety of structure in the living body, would be undoubtedly more striking; the emotion stirred in us might be more pungent, and our interest more vivid; yet something, that indeed which makes the poem, would have disappeared. Instead of being toned to the artist's mood by sympathy with the ideas—vague but deep as melody—which the intervention of his mind imports into the subject, we should dwell upon the vigour of

adolescent manhood, we should be curious perhaps to see the youth spring up, we should wonder how his lifted eyes might gaze on us, and what his silent lips might utter.

IV.

Through the art of the sculptor and the painter the human form acquires a language, inexhaustible in symbolism, every limb, every feature, every attitude, being a word full of significance to those who comprehend. Through him a well-shaped hand, or throat, or head, a neck superbly poised on an athletic chest, the sway of the trunk above the hips, the starting of the muscles on the flank, the tendons of the ankle strained for speed, the outline of the shoulder when the arm is raised, the backward bending of the loins, the contours of a body careless in repose or girt for action, are all pregnant with spiritual meaning. It is not necessary that the artist should seek to express ideas while studying and reproducing them. It is enough that he has felt them, thought them out, passed them through the alembic of his mind. Paint or carve the body of a man, and, as you do this nobly, you will give the measure of both highest thought and most impassioned deed; as you do this ignobly, you will suggest evil lusts, animal grossness, or contemptible deformities. The artist, owing to the conditions under which he works, cannot fail to be an interpreter; unable to reproduce the object as it is, he must reproduce what his own self brings to it.

Style is thus an all-important factor in what I have called interpretation, and upon which the ideal element of art depends. Style has been defined as equivalent to the specific qualities of the individual—*Le style c'est l'homme.* Style has also been described as a recasting or remoulding of the stuff of thought. In the figurative arts, style passes form through the crucible of a mind which perceives its qualities in some specific way; style infuses the man, the spiritual nature of

the artist, into his reproduction of the object. Style is what a sentient being, when he tries to imitate, cannot help adding to the thing he renders; it is what obliges the artistic transcript to affect our minds quite otherwise than the thing in nature does.

These considerations might be pursued into the subtlest and remotest regions. Art being essentially "form-giving," and the form being determined by the artist's specific power of selection, and preference for some one aspect or another of the material supplied by nature, it follows that no two men can treat the same subject in the same way. Each individual, to put this point somewhat differently, has his own style; and the exercise of style renders his work not only a copy of the thing perceived, but also an expression of character in the perceiving person. To eliminate the mental element from art, the element of style, the element of interpretation, is therefore utterly impossible. What we call the successive manners of the same master are mainly the result of changes in his way of thinking and feeling, which have necessitated corresponding changes in his interpretation of nature. Compare Raphael's treatment of the female nude in his small panel of the Three Graces (once in Lord Dudley's, now in the Duc d'Aumale's possession) with his treatment of the female nude in the Farnesina frescoes, and you will perceive how the man's emotional and intellectual attitude had altered between the period of his first and that of his third manner.

V.

From these reflections upon the points of difference between a model and a picture from the model, we may return to the old problem of idealism and realism, in order to grasp their correlation in plastic works of art more firmly.

How striking is the contrast between any photograph from

the nude, male or female, and a mezzotint by Bartolozzi! The photograph presents realism in its crudest, most uncompromising aspect; sex and the individual are rendered with brutal fidelity. The mezzotint presents idealism in its flimsiest and most conventional aspect: it is difficult to say whether those decorative figures are meant for men or women; the individual disappears in an agreeable generalisation. Without wishing to create hermaphrodites, the draughtsman produced sexless beings. He sacrificed character, specific type, salience of structure, to the incarnation of a sentiment. Art, when it reached this point, had passed into a kind of senile symbolism, the symbolism of insincerity and second childhood, aiming at nothing but how to clothe a faint and saccharine emotion with graceful form.

The revolt against this disloyalty to truth justified the action of modern realistic and naturalistic schools. It was felt, and rightly felt, that almost any crudity is less offensive than such emasculate distortion of the human form for ornamental purposes. It was felt, and rightly felt, that the idealism of Bartolozzi is the suicide of art.

Yet the question remains, whether uncompromising realism is not in its turn also the suicide of art. Driven by contempt for feeble idealism into blunt copying of what they see before them, realistic draughtsmen find themselves at once outrivalled by the model or the photograph.

Art, after passing through the reactionary stage of realism, must become once more symbolic on a higher level. In its inability to reproduce Tom, Jack, and Harry, powerful and animated types of individual life, it will be forced to do as Michel Angelo and William Blake did, with deeper and more modest reverence for fact than they possessed. Michel Angelo cared much for the human body; Blake cared little for it. Both violated the truth and excellence of nature—the one by studied mathematical hypertrophy of form—the other by visionary disregard of structure. But both

succeeded in making the body symbolic of emotion and of thought.

We might parody the famous saying of Pascal, and declare that the consummate artist must be a *réaliste accompli* and an *idéaliste soumis*. In other words, he must use the truest truth of nature, the most scientific grasp on actual form, in the service of imaginative symbolism. He must at one and the same time both obey and control the model, departing at no point from its teaching, but utilising its character and individuality for the further purpose of expression.

BEAUTY, COMPOSITION, EXPRESSION, CHARACTERISATION.

I.

In the two previous essays I drew attention to what may be called the spontaneous or involuntary elements of ideality existing in all products of the figurative arts. These elements, culminating in style, denote the necessary intervention of human intelligence and feeling in every imitative effort. It is due to them that imitations made by the artist's brain and hand differ in essential respects from imitations made by a machine, and also that no two persons can produce exactly similar transcripts from the same object.

The question, however, may be asked whether imitation *is* the real aim pursued by art. It obviously constitutes the most prominent condition under which the plastic arts fulfil their function. To imitate something can be termed the radical, initial impulse which leads in course of time to independent artistic activity. Figures of men and reindeer scratched on bone implements of the Stone epoch indicate this primal impulse in its earliest stage. Yet even here we may doubt whether the mimetic effort was not subordinate to some free imaginative exercise of mind. Children teach us on this point. It is clear that when they rudely sketch a man or dog, they are thinking of something of which the scrawled man or dog is but a symbol. Their delight in the symbol is quite out of proportion to its value as a representa-

tion of the object. The imitative act and the symbolic shape which results therefrom, are therefore the index of another and ulterior working of their mind.

We may dismiss the mimetic essays of primitive men and children without further notice. What we are at present concerned with is so different in degree of skill as almost to be different in kind, namely art-work produced by the highest faculties of civilised adult humanity. Now, when we reflect upon the totality of such things presented to our observation, we are led to the conclusion that none of the arts has, hitherto at least, been satisfied with simple imitation. This is clear enough in the case of architecture and music. Poetry can only be called an imitative instead of an expressive or presentative art, in the same way as speech in general might, by a kind of quibble, be called imitative. Even the plastic arts, although they are bound to copy visible objects, do not do so for the sake of imitation. Their object is to give delight to the mind through the sense of vision. With this purpose in view, they exercise qualities in the artist which are distinct from his mimetic skill. Speaking broadly, we find that beauty, composition, expression, and characterisation are governing conditions, to which the imitative process has been subordinated, and without which we do not dignify the copy of an object with the name of art-work.

I think it can be shown that in fulfilling these conditions the artist voluntarily insists upon those subjective elements which distinguish a drawing from the living model, or a picture from the photograph of the model. It is therefore of importance to consider the four factors I have mentioned —beauty, composition, expression, and characterisation—with some attention. By doing so we shall understand how the subjectivity, the intervenient intelligence and feeling noticeable in the rudest acts of imitation by man, have been elaborated into fine art.

II.

In a certain sense art can never rival nature in beauty. Man has not the means at his command to do so—not the material for sculpture which shall reproduce flesh surface—not the pigments for painting which shall render light and darkness, atmosphere and colour, as they truly are. Moreover, man is a part of the universe ; his conceptions of beauty are derived from nature. He is unable to transcend the order which he helps to constitute. Yet, while affirming this, we are bound to acknowledge that man's mind is the most perfect of existences at present known to us. Being the most perfect, whatsoever is presented to its observation in the external world lacks something in comparison with itself. This something it is the proper business of the mind to supply, and the power of supplying it is the justification of the figurative arts.

There is a beauty which is never found in nature, but which requires a working of human thought to elicit it from nature ; a beauty not of parts and single persons, but of complex totalities ; a beauty not of flesh and blood, but of mind, imagination, feeling. It is this beauty, where the very best things that can be seen in nature have been educed, and, as it were, quintessenced by human thought, expressed in form by human skill, and gifted with immortal life by human genius—it is this synthetic, intellectual, spirit-penetrated beauty to which the arts aspire.

In sculpture Pheidias gives us the frieze of the Parthenon ; in painting Tintoretto gives us the Bacchus and Ariadne of the Ducal Palace. Of the youths who rode and the maidens who walked in a Panathenaic procession, each may have exhibited the vigour and the charm of actual life more perfectly than their representatives on those bas-reliefs. But no procession could have made such music to the understanding as the sculpture does. Never could the component individuals have

been singly so right, and so right in their relation to the total rhythm. In compensation for that which art must miss when matched with life, something has been added—permanent, enduring, tranquil, inexhaustible in harmonies. When we turn to Tintoretto's picture, it is manifest that nature commonly produces more beautiful hands and feet than those which satisfied the painter. Countless women surpass his Aphrodite and his Ariadne in charm ; nor is the Bacchus an exceptionally handsome youth. We could easily find out more lovely islands and a dreamier expanse of azure sea. Yet the world of fact has not revealed to mortal sense such beauty as this picture does ; for form, landscape, colour, the play of light and shadow, have here been brought into concordance with a leading tone of intellectual emotion, a perception of divine melody existing in the painter's brain. This dominant subjective sense of beauty does not violate the truth of nature ; but it is not to be satisfied at any single moment by external nature ; and it is the prerogative of the human spirit to evoke such dreamland as shall correspond to its deep longing.

We must advance a step farther, and admit that the mind, reflecting upon nature, and generalising the various suggestions of beauty which it has received from nature, becomes aware of an infinity which it can only grasp through thought and feeling, which shall never be fully revealed upon this earth, but which poetry and art bring nearer to our sensuous perceptions. Shelley, personifying this ideal vision, and addressing it as a goddess in his "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," exclaims:

> Man were immortal and omnipotent,
> Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
> Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.

Wordsworth, in calmer and more humble language, hits the mark when speaking of "the gleam, the light that never was on sea or land." Plato thought of this when he explained

how the mind ascends from the contemplation of beautiful objects to the vision of beauty in its essence; and when he suggested, under the form of an allegory, that the soul of man carries with it some remembrance of the archetypal loveliness beheld in previous stages of existence. It is the function of all true art to shed this gleam, this light, upon the things which have been conscientiously and lovingly observed in nature. It is the function of art to give the world a glimpse and foretaste of that universal beauty by selecting from natural objects their choicest qualities, and combining these in a harmony beyond the sphere of actual material things.

Of this divine and transcendental loveliness Marlowe prophesied in the sublime incoherence of a well-known passage of his *Tamburlaine*. "What is beauty, then?" the hero asks:

> If all the pens that ever poets held,
> Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,
> And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
> Their minds, and muses on admired themes—
> If all the heavenly quintessence they still
> From their immortal flowers of poesy,
> Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive
> The highest reaches of a human wit—
> If these had made one poem's period,
> And all combined in beauty's worthiness,
> Yet should there hover in their restless heads
> One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,
> Which into words no virtue can digest.

There is no denying the reality *for us* of this ideal. That elusive loveliness which "hovers in the restless heads" of poets, may not be something tangible, demonstrable, in nature. But it remains a substantial fact for the subjective sentient being. The thirst to seize and capture it, which lures the artist on, "for ever following and for ever foiled," is no mere morbid or capricious longing. Given at the same time exactitude of observation, and fidelity to nature, this element, in so far as it has been communicated to his work, constitutes its highest value.

III.

Beauty is so essential a condition of the arts that when we come to treat of composition or design, this has to be considered as a constituent of intellectual beauty. Here, however, we are dealing with something more scientific, something more strictly calculated, something less determined by emotion. Composition implies balance, proportion, symmetry, the subordination of each part to the whole. In figurative art it is a synthesis of lines and masses resulting in a total unity; but inasmuch as these arts represent nature which is living, the more such synthesis approaches the symmetry of living organism, not that of a geometrical diagram, the better it will be. In sculpture the statue must present harmonious development of structure from every point of view. It must be so composed that its organic unity shall offer a variety of rhythmically ordered outlines, suggesting in one stationary attitude the inexhaustible capacities for action of the living model. This, it may be observed, is one chief reason why heavily draped figures are only adapted to niches. The Sophocles of the Lateran, the Phocion and the Demosthenes of the Vatican, are so ingeniously clothed that none of the resources of the living body remain unindicated. But modern sculptors too often neglect this obvious necessity for composition in their work. They erect in the open air monumental statues—like that, for instance, of Lionardo da Vinci upon the Piazza della Scala at Milan—which offer an effective front view to the spectator, while the back presents merely a monotonous expanse of drapery. Recumbent figures upon tombs—Gaston de Foix in the Brera, the Cardinal of Portugal at San Miniato, Ilaria del Carretto in the Cathedral of Lucca—make less demand upon the faculty of composition, because the attitude is one of sleep or death, and so it need not suggest possibilities of movement. Such works of statuary, moreover,

owing to their position, can only be regarded from two or three points of view.

In painting, the principles of composition are both simpler and more complicated. They are simpler inasmuch as a picture, being a flat superficies, cannot be regarded from several points of view, and therefore the figures which it represents have not to be studied with regard to varied harmony of outline. It is more complicated because form, perspective, colour, light, and shadow are bound to contribute to one effect of unity. In a well-composed picture all these elements must be brought into accord. If we start with the cartoon in outline for a painting, we find that the several forms of which it is composed have been so arranged as to balance each other; the scheme of lines presents agreeable rhythms whereby each part is made subordinate to a totality. If we proceed to a sepia sketch for the same painting, we notice that the unity of effect already gained by interpenetrating interflowing lines is further strengthened by the distribution of light and dark upon similar principles of balance. When at length we view the picture finished on the painter's easel, we see that colour has been managed upon fundamentally the same principle. Only the greatest masters of the brush have been able to combine perfect balance of form, perfect balance of chiaroscuro, and perfect balance of colour in a single composition. Sculpturesque painters, like Michel Angelo, attend principally to composition by lines, subordinating the play of light and shadow, and tinting with parsimony or timidity. Some of the less highly gifted Venetian painters, men like Bonifazio, are contented with composition by colour, neglecting the balance and grouping of their figures. Tintoretto, who often seems careless about his linear design, obtains the most striking effects of composition by his marvellously powerful distribution of light and dark in counterbalancing masses. Fra Bartolommeo and the Florentines in general rely more than is desirable upon geometrical schemes of

linear composition, so that the pyramidal arrangement assumes a kind of tyranny in their paintings. Rubens, with his keen relish for nature, discards this mechanical assistance, trusting to the life which plays so vigorously in each part of his work. Few attain to the consummate artistic harmony which characterises the best pictures of Andrea del Sarto. He seems to deserve his title of "faultless" principally by having known how to unite the three elements of composition —line, colour, chiaroscuro—in reciprocally helpful harmony.

The necessity for composition in art might be deduced not only from the natural craving of the mind after symmetry and rhythm, but also from art's relative incapacity to rival nature. The model is in movement, the multitude is swaying to and fro, the landscape varies with cloud-shadows and changing atmospheric effects ; but statue and picture must be stationary. They arrest the life of Nature at an instant ; they select one suggestion from the multiplicity of her suggestions ; they are symbols, and not copies of the object as it meets our sensuous perception. Art is accordingly bound to introduce an equivalent for what it cannot represent. Like ideal beauty, composition is a compensation offered to the subjectivity of man. From this we might once more deduce the corollary that art cannot abide contented with bare imitation. Man's soul speaks to man's soul from the picture, and says something which nature does not say.

No one will, however, deny that everywhere in nature, especially in sublime landscape or in exceptionally perfect single figures, the most consummate composition may be observed. In nature, however, such composition is fugitive. We return to the landscape and find that altered light or atmosphere has spoiled the picture ; the linear balance is still there, the rest has vanished. The model drops an upraised arm, and the momentary magic of his attitude, complete in sculpturesque variety of rhythm, is dispersed. It is the artist's duty, while making himself the secretary of Nature's shyest

thoughts and the interpreter of her secluded mysteries, to perpetuate these fugitive perfections in work which cannot pass away. While assuming this function he collaborates with Nature, and becomes himself, through the infusion of his spirit, a portion of the picture he produces.

IV.

This leads us to consider expression as one of the factors which constitute the so-called ideality of art. Expression, in its relation to sculpture and painting, is a word of double meaning. It may mean the expression which resides in the object itself, which the artist seeks to seize and to render as powerfully as he can—the expression which belongs to a good portrait. Or it may mean the expression of subjective thought and feeling, not inherent in the object, for which the forms of art are vehicles. I shall deal at present only with expression in the second of these senses.

I need not observe that much difference of opinion exists as to whether artists ought to aim deliberately at expressing thoughts and emotions. The elder schools of criticism assumed, perhaps too confidently, that such expression is the ultimate end and highest function of art. They could point, in justification of this view, to the best examples of Hellenic sculpture and Italian painting. It is obvious that both Greeks and Italians aimed at embodying psychological qualities nicely discriminated, powerfully marked, and subtly graduated, in their work. The Italians went farther, and attempted to set forth episodes of religious and secular history with dramatic vividness. But younger students of the arts advance a counter theory, to the effect that it is not the prime function of the fine arts to externalise a thought or an emotion, so much as to create beautiful schemes of form, colour, light and shade, in harmony with nature. These critics support their opinion by pointing to the failure of dramatic, historical, religious, sentimental art-work during

the last two centuries. In fact, we are here once more facing the old antithesis of idealism and realism under another aspect. As before, the problem must be met and dealt with by a clear intelligence of terms and a perception of the correlation between apparent opposites.

I have already tried to establish the principle that every product of figurative art, however simple, is subject to conditions which differentiate a draughtsman from a machine. It must reveal something of the nature of personal thought and feeling. The only question is how far this revelation or expression can be legitimately carried ; whether it should be left to the spontaneous exhibition of the artist's temperament through style, or whether the artist should aim at uttering the thought of his brain, the emotion of his heart, through forms selected with deliberate intention for the purpose.

This question turns first upon the choice of subjects and the artist's faculty to grapple with them ; secondly, upon the consideration whether there are not limits to art which render some subjects, although legitimate enough in poetry or fiction, unfit for figurative presentation.

There can be no doubt that when Pheidias planned the Olympian Zeus, which typified the Supreme Deity for Hellas, he intended to express as much definite specific thought as he could put into a noble figure. There can be equally no doubt that Lionardo's Christ in the Last Supper, Raphael's Madonna di San Sisto, Tintoretto's Christ before Pilate, are attempts upon the part of their respective painters to express thoughts no less definite and specific. Whatever other excellences these masterpieces may display, their crowning merit in their makers' eyes was certainly expression. We cannot name a Faun, a Hermes, an Aphrodite, a Pallas, among Greek statues, not a St. Sebastian, a St. John, a Magdalene, a Catherine of Siena, among Italian pictures, which does not express some salient subjective quality. The main difference between Greek and Italian work in this

respect is that the Pagan mythology lent itself better than the Christian to artistic characterisation. What I mean is that the Greek Pantheon contained an inexhaustible number of clearly-marked and well-distinguished personalities; the several qualities of human nature were presented in concrete form by those ideal beings, each of whom had a separate legend. Christian saints, upon the other hand, are all formed upon one model of holiness, faith, humility, self-sacrifice, chastity, and so forth. As Goethe remarked to Eckermann, while showing him a group of Christ with the Twelve Apostles: "These forms are but poor subjects for sculpture. One apostle is always much like another, and very few have enough life and action connected with them to give them character and significance." It follows, therefore, that whereas Here, Aphrodite, Artemis, Pallas, can be at once distinguished by the type invented for them by the artist, it is necessary to give St. Catherine of Alexandria a broken wheel, St. Sebastian an arrow, St. Agnes a lamb, St. Lucy a pair of eyes upon a plate, in order to explain them. But to return from this excursion. Expression obviously determines the composition of the Dying Gladiator, the Laocoön, the mosaic of the Battle of the Issus, the fresco of the Bridal in the Vatican. No less does expression rule Raphael's School of Athens, Tintoretto's Crucifixion at San Rocco, Giotto's allegories at Assisi, Michel Angelo's Sibyls and Prophets in the Sistine Chapel. These statues and pictures must always be classed among the highest achievements of art, and they owe their rank to the fact that, in each case, sculptor and painter aimed consciously at expressing certain thoughts and certain emotions.

Another list of examples might be adduced from antique and modern masterpieces, in which the expression of ideas would not be so obvious. I will select the Apoxyomenos of the Vatican (a young athlete scraping his right arm with the strigil), and Tintoretto's Bacchus and Ariadne. Personally, I

prefer this statue and this picture to any other statues and any other pictures I have seen; and I am well aware that they affect me intellectually and emotionally, only in the same subtle way as music does. In other words, they express things vaguer, more remote, but not less real to the soul, than thought and language do. The secret of their power is the communication of a mood. This does not, then, reverse the position that the figurative arts are arts of expression. Definitely or vaguely, with deliberate intention or by spontaneous suggestiveness, the work of art speaks to our spirit.

To be dramatic is not the prime function of the figurative arts. They cannot imitate the suffering depicted on the face of a man who is being tortured to death. They cannot rival the natural look of terror in a man threatened with sudden assassination. They cannot do these things with success, and therefore they ought to refrain from the attempt. That is the reason why the Laocoön, though dramatically and realistically feeble, exceeds the bounds of sculpturesque expression, while Titian's Peter Martyr trembled dangerously on the verge of the theatrical. But within their limits of harmonious beauty, of composition and of rhythmic repose, these arts can *suggest* action, passion, struggle, aspiration, anguish, with a penetrative depth which rescues such motions of the soul from the sphere of the transitory, and confers on them the permanence of style.

Since the publication by Lessing of his *Laocoön*, this limitation of the plastic arts has been accepted as axiomatic, and its truth is daily proved by the study of the best work. I believe, however, that the same principle might equally well be deduced from the fact on which I have so often insisted, namely, the relative inferiority of art to nature. Incapable of rivalling reality in its own sphere, the arts assert compensatory advantages, by the adroit use of their limitations and by the introduction of subjective elements. Among the latter have to be reckoned the controlling sense of beauty

and the feeling for composition on which I have already dwelt, together with those qualities of sympathy, reserve, delicacy, self-restraint, those preferences for refinement, those tendencies making for spiritual progress rather than for relapse into bestial conditions, which constitute humanity. It is obvious that no art is capable of adequately imitating the agony depicted on the face of a man dying a slow death by torture, because it cannot follow all the phases of that agony. It dares not represent some of the more revolting details of crucifixion, for example—*proluvies ventris et vesicæ* —dislocation of limbs by restless writhing, spasmodic convulsion of nerves and muscles. It is both unable and unwilling to carry expression to extremity. Here, then, as elsewhere, lack of power to be literally realistic combines with the display of subjectivity, and we reach the artistic mean in idealistic representation.

V.

Characterisation is no longer the expression of a thought or feeling, a passion or a sentiment, intended by the artist and impressed upon his transcript from the model. It implies an effort to penetrate and then to represent the essential character of his model in the most forcible way. In its highest form it exercises the imaginative faculty possessed by the greater portrait-painters, which enables them to pierce below the surface, and to use the physical as index to the spiritual qualities of men and women. It may, however, be limited to the vigorous delineation of salient points, and to the accentuation of marked peculiarities. In the latter case characterisation borders upon caricature. In all cases it implies a willing sacrifice of superficial beauty for the sake of force and uncompromising veracity. Through vigorous characterisation, through the mental power displayed in it, ugliness may be raised to sublimity, and even the revolting may obtain the power to fascinate. Instead of being realistic,

this is one of the most idealistic functions of art. The dwarfs of Velasquez—Titian's terrible old woman with the scroll "Col Tempo"—cannot be claimed by realism. The intensity of selective insight exhibited in these works places them in the ideal category as surely as any Genius by Michel Angelo upon the vaulting of the Sistine Chapel. Interpretation of the object reaches its climax here.

VI.

It will seem, I expect, to many of my readers that I have been elaborately proving a truism in the foregoing pages, the aim of my argument being to show that art cannot dispense with an element of ideality or exist apart from the expression of thought or feeling. Still it is always well, in matters so intangible as æsthetic criticism, to start by claiming nothing which does not admit of demonstration. The less we postulate, the firmer will our ground be in the future.

The final truth impressed upon my own mind by the analysis attempted in these three essays is that everything which man can do in imitation of nature falls short of the fact, as fact. We cannot make the image of a tree, or a flower, or a man, which shall yield us one-tenth part of the pleasure or the wonder which the sight of the tree, the flower, the living man yields. Who can reproduce by pigments the luminous texture of a lily chalice or the sheeny velvet of a pelargonium petal? It is impossible to relate a story or to act a drama which shall contain as much of poignant interest as what happens daily to thousands of our fellow-creatures on this planet. The whole hell of Dante is as nothing in sheer intensity when tested by the night hours of a tortured conscience; and even Sappho's odes seem calm beside a lover's actual palpitations. Therefore this function of man's intellect, called art, and classified since Aristotle's epoch under the title of Imitation, is, in comparison with the object imitated, "as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine."

As a merely mimetic process, art is so conspicuously a failure, whether we take drama, lyric, work of fiction, statue, or painting into account, that its pretension to be realistic in the technical sense of that word must pass for a piece of impertinence and self-inflated ignorance. Aristotle has much to answer for, since he it was who first used the phrase Mimesis, or imitation, and treated the arts from that starting-point. He set reflection on the wrong track, instead of making it at once clear that we must look for something else in the arts, and that imitation is only a condition under which they partially fulfil their common task.

It is indeed the duty of all arts faithfully to follow in the steps of Nature, to create nothing without her sanction, to read her book at morn, and noon, and eventide, and never to deviate from her teaching. But they must resign the attempt to do again what Nature does. They must give up the ambition to be unconditionally realistic, flawlessly naturalistic. They must recognise the fact that they cannot rival the sun in his draughtsmanship, or the mirror-surface of a mountain tarn in its veracity of reproduction.

> To humbler functions, awful power,
> I call thee!

Yes, indeed, to functions humbler in one sense but loftier in another, for art obeys the freedom of the spirit, and is restrained by limitations very different in quality from those necessities under which mechanical copies of nature are evolved.

The whole province of the human intellect and emotion is art's sphere, wherein to expatiate with the untrammelled liberty and creative power of mind. Not the heights alone, but the depths also of humanity lie unveiled before the artist. The forms he uses are but symbols, whereby he speaks as soul to soul. To him it is given to effect a real new birth of beauty, by baptizing nature in the rivers of the spirit. To him again it is given to display the moral ugliness of vice, the pathos of

suffering, the tragic fate of heroes. Nothing within the range of man's capacity is wholly alien to art. Great races have consigned their most earnest aspirations, their strivings after a solution of "the riddle of this painful earth," their inflexible codes of conduct, to the forms of art; and naught survives of them but sphinx-like figures carved on rocks in wildernesses, or mystic shapes half buried in the tangles of primeval forests. Yet from these dead stones the spirit still speaks through art, still tells us by what faiths those men who were our ancestors both lived and died. Nor this alone, but whatsoever is capricious, fascinating, superficially delightful, evanescently fragrant to the soul in reverie, obeys the artist's touch. And the lyre of art is an instrument of five chords. Architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry, music, are the strings upon which the genius of art plays, according to the diverse nature of the spiritual message which human mind conveys to mind through sensuous impressions. Only two of these are bound to imitation of the outer world; and they use imitation for the utterance of what is integral with mind.

It is the privilege of art to quicken feeling, and to lead our soul through all the labyrinths of life as in a vision. Sculpture and painting, in particular, teach us to see what is noteworthy in the form of man and in the face of nature. Not many weeks ago, I walked in the light of a mellow July sunset along the Serpentine, watching the crowd of men and lads who bathe there. I recognised how impossible it would be to reproduce in its complexity of interest and beauty what I saw before me—the space, the atmosphere, the massive trees, the luminosity of sky above, the sheeny, troubled surface of the pond, and above all, the innumerable groups and changeful attitudes of naked men in every posture. And yet, at the same time, it was borne in upon my mind that only through the service of art, through the labour of Greek sculptors and the industry of modern painters, was I at the proper point for discerning what this common scene contained of beauty and

of interest. No painting could place in right relation to the whole and to the parts the multiplicity of marvels it offered to my vision. No sculpture could fix and perpetuate the grace inseparable from movement in those men and lads. But except for years of training under this influence, should I have had the eyes to see and the spirit to admire what was revealed to me?

Art satisfies the desire of man for fidelity of record, for excellence of workmanship, and for permanence. It gratifies our sense of ingenuity. It enables us to enjoy summer in winter, poetry among prosaic circumstances, the country in the town, woodland and river in the sick-room, open air and joyousness in prisons—or in what is often tantamount to prison, in our daily life. All this it achieves by means of its wonderful shadow-work of forms; and it can do this, as nature cannot, for generations which succeed each other like the leaves of kindly seasons. It is even more poignant than nature, by reason of the sympathy between the artist's mind and ours. It satisfies the infantine and ever-present longing for romance in human hearts—the thirst to view things nobler and less tiresome than we hourly find them; the yearning for companionship with heroic souls; the hunger to be bathed in turbulent passions and be purified by their expansion; the aspiration to behold the world more clearly and with deeper intuition; the curiosity to be present at perilous adventures and at the crisis of great destinies, if only in a vision. It fills up, in one word, that void of our daily experience, which is alluded to in the French saying: "Rien n'est si joli que la fable, si triste que la vérité."

The world which art creates for us is like the Greek Elysium. In it exist the unsubstantial shades

> Of all that is most beauteous—imaged there
> In happier beauty; more pellucid streams,
> An ampler ether, a diviner air,
> And fields invested with purpureal gleams;
> Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
> Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey.

Human tragedies removed into this Elysian sphere lose their brutality, and shock our sense no longer. Human joys are divested of their crude excitement. The æsthetic emotion does not stimulate pain or pleasure in the same degree as the immediate emotions. Consequently, it does not lead to action, whether of pursuit or of avoidance. The self within us, powerfully played upon by images of suffering or delight, remains quiescent, sterile of endeavour, steeped in the luminous atmosphere of reverie. The beautiful, as Kant said, is the object of a disinterested satisfaction. And this is probably what Aristotle had in his mind when he defined the end of tragedy to be a purification of the emotions through pity and terror.

"To allay the perturbation of the mind and set the affections in right tune," wrote Milton in his panegyric of the poet's function. Before entering art's Elysium, the life of man drinks Lethe; we know that sorrows will be tempered there to sadness, acute passions robbed of their sting, memories refined to a faint echo of experience. Yet though the emotions stimulated by art are unfruitful of act, sterile of energy, purged of their selfish element, they are none the less real and serious. They possess a notable power over the formation of character. One effect of art has been too little observed by writers upon ethics. It is the arousing in us of what may be called indefinite illimitable desire. A desire which is tyrannous, precisely because it is vague, because its rhythms, excited by intangibilities, react upon the finest and remotest fibres of our being. The bearing of this remark can best perhaps be illustrated by an example. Hazlitt relates that, when he read the last scene between the lovers in Schiller's *Don Carlos*, he was left with "a deep sense of suffering and a strong desire after good, which has haunted me ever since." Those words sufficiently describe the stirring of the soul effected by great art; and upon the moral quality of the work of art which stimulates this indefinite desire, will

depend much of the moral temper of the man who feels it. The desire haunts him through his life, and is rooted in the recollection of the work which called it forth. It may be the pathos of Cordelia's death in *King Lear* which evoked the emotion ; it may be Plato's rapturous description of love in the *Phædrus*. We may owe its presence in our being to the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel, or we may derive it from

> That most perfect of antiques
> They call the Genius of the Vatican,
> Which seems too beauteous to endure itself
> In this mixed world.

As dreams of the night bring us home to ourselves and discover hidden fountain-heads of passion, so this indefinite illimitable desire, which art excites, creates for those who feel it lasting habits of emotion. The recurrent vibrations of that desire, the persistent images with which it is connected, the mode in which we have been touched to fine pervasive spiritual issues, remain with us for good or evil, abiding witnesses to art's controlling power.

But how is art enabled to do all this? Not by rivalling the draughtsmanship of the sun and the accuracy of a mechanical process. Nay, rather by the exercise of human faculties alone—purged insight, fiery yet patient imagination, earnest thought, love of the best things, ever-eager selection of the highest man can rise to, strong planning and strenuous application to the execution of the plan. The whole macrocosm and all creatures of God, from the cedar of Libanus to the hyssop upon the wall, from Priam among the burning palaces of Troy-town to the boors of a Dutch tavern, from an Olympian athlete to an idle apprentice, from Achilles and S. Francis to Tom Jones and Parson Andrews, lie open to artistic representation. The artist at any hour calls up scenes we cannot see with our own eyes. He transports us from Camberwell to Athens, from Baker Street to the Great Pyramid, from a ball in Belgravia to the dances of Titania's

elves. Yet the magic wand of this Prospero is nothing else but the artist's own mind, which stirs our mind and puts before our eyes the vision. Try as he may do to escape from the conditions under which he labours, he will find that he does not make things as they are, but as they exist for his consciousness; and all his realistic skill must finally subserve the expression of the thought and the emotion which himself contains.

CARICATURE, THE FANTASTIC, THE GROTESQUE.

I.

CARICATURE is a distinct species of characterisation, in which the salient features of a person or an object have been emphasized with the view of rendering them ridiculous. The derivation of this word justifies my definition. It comes from the Italian *caricare*, to charge with a burden, or to surcharge. Thus *caricare un ritratto* means to exaggerate what is already prominent in the model, and in this way to produce a likeness which misrepresents the person, while it remains recognisable. Instead of emphasis, simple distortion may be used to secure the effect of caricature. For example, the hints suggested by reflection in a spoon are amplified into an absurd portrait. Some faces and figures lend themselves better to the concave, others to the convex surface of the spoon. Or a fairly accurate image of a man or woman, modelled in gutta-percha, may be pulled about in various directions, with the result of producing a series of burlesque portraits, in which the likeness of the individual is never wholly lost.

The most effective kind of caricature does not proceed by such distortion. It renders its victim ludicrous or vile by exaggerating what is defective, mean, ignoble in his person, indicating at the same time that some corresponding flaws in his spiritual nature are revealed by them. The master-

pieces of this art are those in which truth has been accentuated by slight but deft and telling emphasis. Nothing, as Aretino once remarked, is more cruel than malevolent insistence upon fact. You cannot injure your neighbour better than by telling the truth about him, if the truth is to his discredit. You cannot make him appear ridiculous more crushingly than by calling attention to real faults in his physique.

Those extraordinary caricatures of human faces which Lionardo da Vinci delighted to produce, illustrate both methods of emphasis and distortion. But they also exhibit the play of a fantastic imagination. He accentuated the analogies of human with bestial features, or degraded his models to the level of goitred idiots by subtle blurrings and erasures of their nobler traits.

Caricature is not identical with satire. Caricature implies exaggeration of some sort. The bitterest satire hits its mark by no exaggeration, but by indignant and unmerciful exposure of ignobility. Yet caricature has always been used for satirical purposes, with notable effect by Aristophanes in his political comedies, with coarse vigour by Gilray in lampoons of the last century, with indulgent humour by our contemporary *Punch*.

The real aim of caricature is to depreciate its object by evoking contempt or stirring laughter, when the imaginative rendering of the person is an unmistakable portrait, but defects are brought into relief which might otherwise have escaped notice. Instead therefore of being realistic, this branch of art must be reckoned as essentially idealistic. In so far as a caricature is powerfully conceived, it calls into play fine, though never the noblest, never the most amiable, qualities of interpretation.

II.

The fantastic need have no element of caricature. It invariably implies a certain exaggeration or distortion of nature; but it lacks that deliberate intention to disparage, which lies at the root of caricature. What we call fantastic in art results from an exercise of the capricious fancy, playing with things which it combines into arbitrary non-existent forms. These may be merely graceful, as is the case with arabesques devised by old Italian painters—frescoed patterns upon walls and ceilings, in which tendrils of the vine, acanthus foliage, parts of beasts and men and birds and fabulous creatures are brought into quasi-organic fusion with candelabra, goblets, lyres, and other familiar objects of utility.

In its higher manifestations fantastic art creates beautiful or terrific forms in correspondence with some vision of the excited imagination. The sphinx and the dragon, the world-snake of Scandinavian mythology, Shakespeare's Ariel, Dante's Lucifer, are fantastic in this higher sense. In them real conditions of man's subjective being have taken sensuous shape at the bidding of creative genius. The artist, while giving birth to such fantastic creatures of imagination, resembles a deeply-stirred and dreaming man, whose brain projects impossible shapes to symbolise the perturbations of his spirit. Myth and allegory, the metamorphosis of mortals into plants, fairies, satyrs, nymphs, and tutelary deities of sea or forest, are examples of the fantastic in this sphere of highest poetry.

According to the view which I have just expressed, fantastic art has to be considered as the least realistic of all artistic species; it is that in which the human mind shows its ideality, its subjective freedom, its independence of fact and external nature, most completely. Here a man's studies of reality outside him, acute and penetrating as these may

be, become subservient to the presentation of thoughts and emotions which have no validity except for his internal consciousness.

> He will watch from dawn till gloom
> The lake-reflected sun illume
> The yellow bees in the ivy bloom,
> Nor heed nor see what things they be,
> But from these create he can
> Forms more real than living man,
> Nurslings of immortality.

When well constructed, powerfully conceived, vigorously projected, with sufficiency of verisimilitude to give them rank among extraordinary phenomena, and with sufficient correspondence to the natural moods of human thought, these phantasies and their appropriate shapes acquire a reality of their own, and impose upon the credulity of mankind. They are felt to be actual through the force with which their makers felt them, and through their adaptation to the fancies of imaginative minds in general. Thus the chimæra of Hellenic sculpture, the horned and hoofed devil of mediæval painting, Shakespeare's Caliban, Milton's Death, Goethe's Mephistopheles, can all be claimed as products of fantastic art. Yet these figments are hardly less real for our consciousness than the Farnese bull, Lancelot, Landseer's stags, Hamlet, Dr. Brown's Rab, Adam Bede, and other products of imaginative art which are modelled from familiar objects. In this way fantastic art strikingly brings home to us the truth of what Tasso once said: *Non è creatore se non Iddio ed il poeta* (God and the poet are the only creators). It does this because it proves that the recombining power of the imagination, as in dreams, so also in poetry and plastic art, is able to construct unrealities which possess even more than the spiritual influence and all but the validity of fact for human minds.

III.

The grotesque is a branch of the fantastic. Its specific difference lies in the fact that an element of caricature, whether deliberately intended or imported by the craftsman's spontaneity of humour, forms an ingredient in the thing produced. Certain races and certain epochs display a predilection for the grotesque, which is conspicuously absent in others. Hellenic art, I think, was never intentionally grotesque, except on rare occasions in the comedy of Aristophanes. What resembles grotesqueness in the archaic stages of Greek sculpture—in the bas-reliefs from Selinus, for example—must be ascribed to *naïveté* and lack of technical skill. On the contrary, Lombard sculpture, as we study this on the façades of North Italian churches, and mediæval Teutonic art in general, as we study this upon the pages of illustrated manuscripts, in the choir-stalls of our cathedrals, or in the carven ornaments of their exteriors, rarely fails to introduce some grotesque element. The free play of the Northern fancy ran over easily into distortion, degradation of form, burlesque. Scandinavian poetry of the best period exhibits striking specimens of Aristophanic satire, in which the gods are mercilessly dealt with. Grotesqueness may be traced in all the fantastic beings of Celtic and Germanic folk-lore—in gnomes inhabiting the mountains, in kelpies of the streams and mermaids of the ocean, in Puck and Robin Goodfellow, in fairies of heath and woodland, in the princesses of Border ballad-literature fated by magic spells to dree their doom as loathly dragons.

Of such grotesqueness I doubt whether we can discern a trace in classical mythology and art. Ugly stories about Zeus and Cronos, quaint stories about the metamorphoses of Proteus, and the Phorcydes with their one eye, are not grotesque. They lack the touch of caricature, always a

conscious or semi-conscious element, which is needful to create the species.

This element is absent in the voluminous literature of the Arabs, as that is known to us through the "Arabian Nights." Princesses transformed into parrots, djinns with swarthy faces doting on fair damsels, water-carriers converted by some spell into caliphs, ghouls, animals that talk, immense birds brooding over treasures in the wilderness, are not grotesque. They lack the touch of conscious caricature added to free fancy which differentiates the species.

Both caricature and the fantastic played an important part in Southern and Eastern literature, but they did not come into the peculiar connection which is necessary to grotesqueness. The fantastic made itself moderately felt in Hellas, and assumed gigantic proportions in Islam. The Asiatic and Greek minds, however, lacked a quality which was demanded in order to elicit grotesqueness from phantasy. That quality the Teutonic section of the Aryan family possessed in abundance ; it was all-pervasive in the products of their genius. We may define it broadly as humour. I do not deny humour to the Greeks and Orientals ; but I contend that Teutons have the merit of applying humour to caricature and the fantastic, so as to educe from both in combination what we call grotesqueness.

For obvious reasons I must omit all mention of what strikes us as grotesque in the art-work of races with whom we are imperfectly in sympathy. Hindoo idols, Chinese and Japanese bronzes, Aztec bas-reliefs, and such things, seem to us grotesque. But it is almost impossible to decide how far this apparent grotesqueness is due to inadequate comprehension on our part, or to religious symbolism. We cannot eliminate the element of genuine intentional grotesqueness which things so far remote from us contain.

IV.

Closely allied to caricature and the grotesque we find obscenity. This indeed has generally entered into both. The reason is not far to seek. Nothing exposes human beings to more contemptuous derision than the accentuation in their persons of that which self-respect induces them to hide. Indecency is therefore a powerful resource for satirical caricaturists. Nothing, again, in the horse-play of the fancy comes readier to hand than the burlesque exhibition of things usually concealed. It appeals to the gross natural man, upon whose sense of humour the creator of grotesque imagery wishes to work, and with whom he is in cordial sympathy.

Indecency has always been extruded from the temple of art, and relegated to slums and dubious places in its precincts. Why is this? Perhaps it would suffice to answer that art is a mirror of human life, and that those things which we exclude from social intercourse are consequently excluded from the æsthetic domain. This is an adequate account of the matter. But something will be gained for the understanding of art in general if we examine the problem with more attention.

Shelley lays it down as an axiom that all obscenity implies a crime against the spiritual nature of man. This dictum takes for granted an advanced state of society, when merely sensual functions have come to be regarded with sensitive modesty. In other words, it defines the essence of obscenity to be some cynical or voluptuous isolation of what is animal in man, for special contemplation by the mind. Savages recognise nothing indecent in things which we consider highly improper. Our ancestors spoke without a blush about matters which could not now be mentioned before a polite company. This is because savages and people of the Elizabethan age were naïve, where we have become self-conscious. Thus Shelley's *crimen læsæ majestatis* varies with the age and the conditions of civility in which men live. Much that is

treasonable here and now against the spiritual nature of humanity was unassailable two hundred years ago, and is still respectable in the tropics. The point at issue is to decide what constitutes a violation of local and temporal decorum in this respect. Such violation is obscenity ; and the conditions vary almost imperceptibly with the growth of society, but always in favour of decorum.

There are many things allowable, nay laudable, in act, which it is unpermissible to represent in figurative art or to dwell upon in poetry. Yet these things imply nothing ugly. On the contrary, they are compatible with the highest degree of natural beauty. Even Aretino's famous postures, if painted with the passion of Giorgione, could not be pronounced unbeautiful. Such motives abound in juxtapositions of forms and in contrasts of physical types, which yield everything the painter most desires for achieving his most ambitious triumphs. The delineation of these things, however, though they are allowable and laudable in act, though they are plastically beautiful, offends our taste and is intolerable. If we ask why this is so, the answer, I think, must be that civilisation only accepts art under the condition of its making for the nobler tendencies of human nature. In truth, I have approached the present topic, in spite of its difficulty, mainly because it confirms the views I hold regarding the dependence of the arts on ethics.

There are acts necessary to the preservation of the species, functions important in the economy of man ; but these, by a tacit consensus of opinion, we refuse to talk about, and these therefore we are unwilling to see reflected in art's spiritual looking-glass. We grudge their being brought into the sphere of intellectual things. We feel that the representation of them, implying as this does the working of the artist's mind and our mind on them, contradicts a self-preservative instinct which has been elaborately cultivated through unnumbered generations for the welfare of the social organism.

Such representation brings before the sense in figure what is already powerful enough in fact. It stirs in us what education tends to curb, and exposes what humane culture teaches us to withdraw from observation.

This position admits of somewhat different statement. At a certain point art must make common cause with morality, and the plastically beautiful has to be limited by ethical laws. Man is so complex a being, and in the complex of his nature the morally-trained sensibilities play so prominent a part, that art, which aims at giving only elevated enjoyment, cannot neglect ethics. Without being didactic it must be moralised, because the normal man is moralised. If it repudiates this obligation, it errs against its own ideal of harmony, rhythm, repose, synthetic beauty. It introduces an element which we seek to subordinate in life, and by which we are afraid of being mastered. It ceases to be adequate to humanity in its best moments, and these best moments art has undertaken to present in forms of sensuous but dignified loveliness.

Most people will agree upon this point. There remains, however, considerable difference of opinion as to the boundaries which art dares not overpass—as to what deserves the opprobrious title of indecency in plastic or poetic presentation. Some folk seem inclined to ban the nude without exception, relegating the grandest handiwork of God, the human form divine, to the obscurity of shrouded vestments. Disinclined as I am to adopt this extreme position, I admit that just here the cleanness or uncleanness of the artist's mind, as felt in his touch on doubtful subjects, becomes a matter of ethical importance. All depends on taste, on method of treatment, on the tone communicated, on the mood in which matters of delicacy have been viewed. Tintoretto elevates our imagination by his pictures of Eve tempting Adam; Michel Angelo restrains and chastens wandering fancy; Raphael removes the same theme beyond the sphere of voluptuous suggestion, while retaining some-

thing of its sensuous allurement; Rembrandt produces a cynical satire in the style of Swift's description of Yahoos; Luca Giordano disgusts by coarse and full-blown carnalism.

V.

These considerations lead us finally to inquire in what sphere of human sensibility the arts legitimately move.

It is usual to distinguish between æsthetic and non-æsthetic senses—meaning by the former sight and hearing, by the latter touch, taste, smell. In truth, no great art has yet been based upon the three last-mentioned senses, in the same way as painting and sculpture have been based on sight and music upon hearing. This is because the two so-called æsthetic senses are links between what is spiritual in us and external nature; we use them in the finer operations of our intelligence. The three non-æsthetic senses serve utility and natural needs; they have not been brought into that comity where thought and emotion can be sensuously presented to the mind. It is only by the faintest suggestions that a touch, a taste, a smell evokes some spiritual mood. When it does so the effect is indeed striking; we are thrilled in our very entrails and marrow. But these suggestions are, in our present condition, so vague, so elusive, so evanescent, so peculiar to the individual, that no attempt has been made to regard them as a substantial groundwork for the edifice of art.

In man we find an uninterrupted rhythm from the simplest to the most complex states of consciousness, passing from mere sensation up to elaborated thought. No break can be detected in this rhythm, although psychologists are wont to denote its salient moments by distinctive names. They speak of sensation, perception, emotion, will, reason, and so forth, as though these were separate faculties. But the infinite subtlety of nature eludes such rude attempts at classification. Art finds its proper sphere of operation only in the middle region of the scale. The physical rudiments of consciousness are

not æsthetic, because they bring our carnal functions into play, and only indirectly agitate the complex of our nature. The more abstract modes of thought are not æsthetic, because they have renounced the element of corporeity and sense; and art has to fulfil its function through sensuous presentation. Art is therefore obliged to cast roots down into sense, and to flower up into thought, remaining within the province where these extremes of consciousness interpenetrate. This is what Hegel meant when he called beauty *die sinnliche Erscheinung der Idee* (the apparition, to sense and in sense, of the idea)—a definition which, in spite of its metaphysical form, is precisely suited to express the fact.

Poetry, if I may apply these conclusions to the most purely intellectual of the arts, makes an appeal to thought, emotion, sense, together, in one blended harmony. If thought predominates too crudely, as in some cantos of Dante's "Paradiso," in some books of Lucretius, in many passages of Milton's and of Wordsworth's verse, then the external form of metre and poetic diction does not save the product from being prosaic. On the other hand, if a coarse appeal be made to sense through sound, as in a large portion of Marino's "Adone," we are cloyed by sweet vacuity. Or if, as in the case of Baffo's Venetian lyrics, the contents be deliberately prurient, awakening mere animal associations, then no form of sonnet, madrigal, or ode saves this poetry from being prosaic. It meets the same condemnation at the lower end of the scale as we passed on parts of Dante, Lucretius, Milton, Wordsworth at the higher end. Purely intellectual and purely sensual poetry fail alike by contradicting the law of poetry's existence. They are not poetry, but something else.

Neither unmixed thought nor unmixed sense is the proper stuff of art. Still we must remember that art, occupying the middle region between these extremes, has to bring the manifold orchestra of consciousness into accord. Nowhere is there an abrupt chasm in man's sentient being. Touch,

taste, smell, sex must be made to vibrate like the dull strings of bass-viols, to thrill like woody tubes of hautboys, to pierce like shrill yet mellow accents of the clarionet, to stir the soul like the tumultuous voices of brass instruments. Sight and hearing, through their keener intellectual significance, dominate this harmony ; even as treble and tenor chords of violin and viola control a symphony. The final object of the whole concert is to delight and stimulate the mind, not to exercise the brain by logical propositions, nor to excite the appetite by indecent imagery. Precisely in this attunement of all the senses to the service of impassioned thought lies the secret of the noblest art.

NOTES ON STYLE.

Part I.

HISTORY AND USAGE OF THE WORD.

I.

THE etymology of words which we are wont to use in a figurative sense will often help us to form a right conception of the different shades of meaning attached to them by custom.

Style is derived from the Latin *stilus;* and *stilus* was the metal-pointed instrument with which the Romans wrote upon their waxen tablets. When Cicero employed the phrase, *orationes pœne Attico stilo scriptæ*, he meant to praise the diction of certain speeches which were written "almost with an Attic pen," or "almost in an Attic style." When he spoke of *stilus exercitatus*, this was equal to "the pen of a practised writer," or "a practised style." *Stilo Plautino* may be indifferently translated "with the pen of Plautus," or "in the style of Plautus."

Thus, during the golden period of Latin literature, the word *stilus* had already passed into the stage of metaphor. The mechanical instrument of writing was taken to indicate the manner in which anything was written, in the same way as we speak of the palette, the burin, or the pencil of artists to indicate the manner of their execution.

Modern scholars, at the time when European culture was still classical and Latin was the universal language, adopted this term naturally. But as no one now used a *stilus* in writing, the metaphor implied in it was not so obvious. The ancients, mindful of its etymology, had confined the word style to modes of writing, with rare and post-Augustan extension to modes of speaking. We have come to apply it to all the arts as well as to much besides. We speak of style in architecture, sculpture, painting, music; style in manners, style in law procedure; the style of royal or noble persons, the old and new style of chronology, the style in which a thing is done or carried out. We have even an adjective from the slang dictionary—stylish—to indicate a smart individual, carriage, horse, costume, and so forth.

This wide extension of the metaphor has induced a further usage, which bears us far away from the original instrument of writing. We talk of style in general, as a quality which some compositions display, while others lack it. We say of an author, not only that he is distinguished by an Attic style or by a practised style, but also that "he has style." What we mean is that his work exhibits certain qualities of artistic distinction. And so we say of a picture: "Whatever its defects may be, everybody will confess that it possesses style."

Style, therefore, in its broadest signification, is now synonymous with mode of expression or presentation. When we praise a piece of prose for its style, we mean that thoughts have been clearly, precisely, powerfully, beautifully expressed in language. When we condemn a building for its style, we mean that the architect has employed a faulty system of construction, a vicious scheme of decoration, or an inharmonious distribution of parts.

The standard of what is good or bad in style varies with fashion and the age in which men live, with their conception of the purposes and functions of the arts, and also with the

bias of successive schools of criticism. In the middle of the last century, the Divine Comedy was reckoned barbarous, and Gothic was a term of obloquy. At the beginning of this century, Pope met with scanty justice ; and refined sensibility shrank with a shudder from the work of Wren.

Yet all judgments in such matters, however divergent they may be, imply the belief that there is a right and wrong in the arts of expression. Criticism aims at ascertaining what constitutes excellence of style apart from changes of fashion, scholastic prejudices, and personal partialities. It seeks to discern and to interpret the goodness or the badness of each particular manifestation, according to the principles by which the artist has been governed, and not by the application of canons irrelevant to his age, race, and aims.

II.

Style, in literature, may be roughly described as the adequate investiture of thought with language. The best style is that in which no other verbal form could be imagined more appropriate for the utterance of thought than the one which has been given by the writer. "Proper words in proper places make the true definition of a style," said Swift. To seize *le mot propre* is the aim of those French authors who are our masters in literary expression regarded as a fine art. Between the thing thought, and the thing uttered, there ought to be no rift for the insertion of the finest edge of disjunctive analysis.

But here we are met with a preliminary problem. Is thought separable from language? Can language be said to have an existence apart from thought, or thought from language?

Scientific students, at the present day, will hardly dispute the priority of thought to language. The rudiments of thought exist in animals who have no articulate speech. In certain states of the human consciousness—in dreams, for

instance, and in those moods of the mind when images are brought suddenly into new and luminous relations—mental operations of the highest importance may be carried on without the intervention of language. We awake to ourselves and become aware of having reached conclusions, although we cannot recall the syllogistic process, and have, perhaps, some difficulty in finding words for what we know to be the real result of cerebration.

Language does not create thought. On the contrary, thought demands language for its utterance. For this very reason thought goes before language, and evokes it as an instrument. But language once created, the words which have been launched on their career, pregnant with antecedent thoughts, react upon the minds of those who use them. As the race exists now, the links of connection between language and thought are so complicated, and of such immemorial antiquity—words are so shot and coloured with past emotions and accepted meaning—that, in literature, thought, the stuff to be expressed, cannot be disentangled from its verbal vehicle. Body is not more inseparable from soul than style from thought, the language of expression from the mental matter to be uttered.

It might appear as though every thought had its inevitable symbol in language, and that style is therefore uncontrollable. This, however, is not the case; for though thought needs the vehicle of words for utterance, it has so fashioned language that many modes of expression for the same idea or emotion are possible. That only one of these is the absolutely right one, will be admitted by those who have seriously studied the problem of style. Yet it is not given to all—nay, it is granted to a very few in each generation—to find the unerring, the inevitable phrase. The thinker has a wide range for choice and selection. He can deal with words to some extent in the same way as the painter deals with form and colour. In this sense language has an independence of its own, and may be

considered external to the literary artist, just as marble is external to the sculptor and musical sound to the composer of a symphony. Later on, however, we shall see that the artist in language does not stand in the same relation to his vehicle as the artist in form, colour, tone.

Every thought then has its own fit and exact mould of language; and each variation of expression causes some modification of the thought to be expressed. The aim of art in writing is therefore to find that form of words which shall most aptly render the thought we seek to utter.

Attention to language and the niceties of style enables a man to acquire the faculty of bringing the subtlest, obscurest, most complicated thoughts to light. What is called command of language is indispensable to a writer; and this, though it implies natural endowment, may be largely improved by study.

Attention to thought enables a man possessed with a fair command of language to seize the words required for its expression. Clear thinking is the first requisite of a good style; for if the thought be vague or feebly grasped, not all the powers of rhetoric will hide its poverty. Better precise and bald lucidity than nebulous magnificence of diction. But when the thought is clear, art may legitimately be exercised, not merely for the purpose of attaining veracity of expression, but also for clothing it with beauty, and decking it with ornament.

III.

This intimate connection of thought with language is the main reason why style differs in the hands of different writers. As a man habitually thinks and feels, so will he express himself. No one can divest himself of inborn personality; and personality is bound to qualify diction. The colour-blind cannot describe landscape in the same way as those who are acutely sensitive to tints. The deaf to music move in a

region apart from that in which tone-lovers dwell. These are coarse and obvious instances. Vocabulary, and not vocabulary alone, but rhythm, cadence, structure of sentence, composition of paragraph, rhetoric, are all conditioned by the artist's individuality.

In like manner the languages of nations are formed by hereditary modes of thought and feeling, by ethnological and climatic conditions, by moral habits and religious ideals. These influences, continued through successive generations, mould the mother speech, and give it what we call its genius. The genius of a language is the genius of the race which made it. This becomes the common property of all the individuals who use it, and communicates a common quality to their style. Vary as men may do among themselves, they exhibit cognate ways of thinking, cognate ways of expressing what they think, through being members of one race and using one national language. An Italian cannot put into words exactly the same shade of thought as a German, or an Englishman as a Frenchman ; the genius of the mother tongue in each case forbids identity of utterance. The truth of this has been acutely felt by all who have attempted to translate the poetry or the philosophy of another literature into their own language.

Style has therefore a double aspect, personal and national. The difficulty of translation, to which I have alluded, may serve to illustrate what is meant by this. Perfect translation from one language into another is impossible, because the personal and national peculiarities of any single composition cannot be reproduced in a version which obeys the genius of a different language, and displays the idiosyncrasy of another writer. The style of the "Æneid," for example, was determined by the nature of Latin as used by Virgil. The style of Dryden's translation is still further qualified by the peculiarities of English as Dryden used it. If the style of the original is a double quantity (Latin + Virgil), the style of the translation is a quadruple quantity (Latin + Virgil combined with

English + Dryden). This is putting the case roughly, and with a crudity which is almost grotesque. Not merely have two languages and two poets co-operated to produce the final result of the translation, but we have also to take into account the mental and moral changes in the world at large, which prevented Dryden from entering into exact sympathy with his original.

Thus, to sum up the main points of this section, we are forced to regard style from two points of view: as something which belongs to the individual through his mental and moral qualities, and through his greater or less command of language; and also as something which the individual derives from the tongue he uses, it being impossible to obtain precisely the same effects in Greek and Latin, French and German. The genius of the race and the genius of the man have both to be considered.

IV.

Hitherto we have been contemplating style subjectively, from the inside. We have considered it as verbal expression, indispensable to human beings in their utterance of thought through language. But we must also approach the problem objectively, from the outside. This we are enabled to do by the admitted fact that style can be controlled, and language artistically handled. "The style of an author should be the image of his mind," said Gibbon. That is the subjective aspect. "But," he continues, "the choice and command of language is the fruit of exercise." That is the objective aspect.

It will be admitted that when we speak of style in literature, we are often thinking of an art whereby men more or less deliberately clothe their thought in language, and of an art which can to some extent be acquired. Words, as I have said above, are for the poet and prose-writer what lines and colours are for the painter, or form and marble for the sculptor.

Thought is, however, so inextricably interwoven with language, and words react so subtly upon mental operations, that language cannot be regarded as a vehicle in the same way as the marble of the sculptor, the pigments of the painter, are plastic vehicles. It is possible, indeed, to treat language æsthetically: that is to say, with special reference to its sonorous, rhythmical, suggestive, and symbolical qualities. Still the fact remains that thought demands language in the simplest no less than in the subtlest modes of utterance, whereby men may communicate with their neighbours; and so words come to the verbal artist surcharged with multitudinous associations. Thought does not demand colour, marble, tone in the ordinary intercourse of life. It uses these things at its pleasure and caprice, not for its necessities. The problem of style in literature is therefore *ab initio* different from that of style in any of the other arts. The writer has to obtain his effects by manipulating a material already pregnant with intellectual and emotional meanings. Nowhere is the connection between content and expression, mental subject-matter and artistic embodiment, more intimate, more vitally dependent upon the kindred essence of the two terms. Neither form in carven stone and painted superficies, nor sound in music, has the same mysterious relation to the human consciousness, the same approximation to identity with thought and feeling, the same diurnal and familiar reciprocity with mental processes, as words have. Thought is expressed, we say, in a statue or a picture or a symphony; but a poem is articulate thought.

Continuing analysis upon this second line, we are met with many uses of the word style, all of which indicate the belief that it is an instrument to be employed at will, and an art to be acquired by cultivation. Thus style is spoken of as the power to express thought with polish, lucidity, correctness, vigour, beauty. We distinguish the style proper to poetry, rhetoric, argument; to tragedy and comedy; to history and

fiction; to the eloquence of the pulpit, the senate and the forum; to scientific exposition and metaphysical speculation. We talk of the grand style and the pedestrian style, the epistolary style and the anecdotical style, the style of conversation and the style of description. In all the applications of the term it is implied that a man of taste and ability will modify his use of language to meet the special requirements of the task proposed. He will have learned by study to distinguish between different tones and values in the instrument of speech, and will have acquired by exercise the power of touching that mighty organ of expression to various issues. In this way, style comes to be regarded as a branch of rhetoric, capable of being reduced to rules, and within certain limits capable of being taught.

Part II.

NATIONAL STYLE.

I.

LANGUAGE in a nation is an index to the mental and emotional character of the nation, to its hereditary antecedents and historical experience.

"What made the Jew a Jew, the Greek a Greek, is as unexplained as what daily causes the germs of an oak and of an ash to produce different trees. All we know is that, in the vague and infinitely distant past, races were nourished into form and individuality by the varied operation of those unreckoned sympathies which attach man to nature, his primitive mother. But the laws of that rudimentary growth are still unknown; 'the abysmal depths of personality' in nations, as in men, remain unsounded; we cannot even experimentalise upon the process of ethnical development. Those mighty works of art which we call languages, in the construction of which whole peoples unconsciously co-operated, the forms of which were determined not by individual genius, but by the instincts of successive generations, acting to one end inherent in the nature of the race—those poems of pure thought and fancy, cadenced not in words, but in living imagery, fountain-heads of inspiration, mirrors of the mind of nascent nations, which we call mythologies—these surely are more marvellous in their infantine spontaneity than any more mature production of the races which evolved them."

These sentences I wrote many years ago; and I resume them here, because they utter our abiding sense of the miracle of national character expressed in language and in myth. Still, though the science of origins throws as yet no light upon the birth of languages and the process whereby they became the symbols of each educated nation's genius, it is not impossible to trace the biography of a people in the development of its mother tongue, and the assimilation through speech of mental qualities derived from other races.

"Language," says Walt Whitman, "is not an abstract construction of the learned, or of dictionary-makers, but is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes of long generations of humanity, and has its bases broad and low, close to the ground. Its final decisions are made by the masses, people nearest the concrete, having most to do with actual land and sea."

That is true in the essential, in the cradle-age of races. But language early passes into a metaphorical stage, when words expressive of the concrete and material are applied to abstract and intellectual concepts—when the diaphragm becomes the mind, and the breath of man's nostrils becomes the soul, and to grasp a thing with the hand signifies to comprehend with the intelligence. Later on, as thought is forced deliberately to forge equivalents in speech for abstract ideas, the influence of individual thinkers begins to tell. Aristotle imposes the nomenclature of logic upon his nation, and through Greek literature upon posterity until the present day. Races intermingle, and assimilate religions, philosophies, systems of jurisprudence. At this point, by borrowing terms which do not suit their native genius, or by clumsy attempts at translation, they run the risk of absorbing elements imperfectly adapted to the ideas they are intended to express. A new mythology of abstractions comes into being. The ὑπόστασις of Greek metaphysic (originally groundwork or substratum, then real existence or substance) takes shape in

the Latin Athanasian creed as *persona* (originally a mask and then a personage), and is repeated in our churches with mistaken connotation by the vulgar in the form of *person*.

During this process of growth, the style of the race manifests itself both by what it assimilates and by what it rejects, by its encouragement of tendencies inherent in the language and its dismissal of inconvenient factors, by its adoption of foreign phrases useful to some special purpose or of metaphors and slang which suit new niceties of meaning, by the awkward adaptation of alien and inharmonious terms necessitated in the traffic of daily life, and finally by the exact and beautiful unfolding of those qualities in which its own strength lies. That language ultimately exhibits the highest capacity for style, which combines conservative respect for its native genius with plasticity, becoming by each phase of growth a more perfect instrument of unimpeded utterance, more receptive of ideas, and more assimilative without loss of character.

Thus the intellectual and emotional qualities of nations determine their style; and their history (contact with other races, submission to altered conditions of society, changes in religion, epochs of culture) is written in their literature. When the nation is a complicated hybrid, as is the case with us English folk, its style presents a complex problem not only to the philologer and etymologist, but also to the student of psychology. A chapter from "Modern Painters" would furnish the analyst with ample material for a lecture on comparative ethnology and the historical evolution of the English people.

II.

Of all languages Greek has the widest range and compass as an organ of expression. Not weight and gravity, but lightness, elasticity, volubility, are its leading characteristics. Strength is so clothed with radiance and beauty (as in the godhood of the Delphian Apollo) that we think less of the

power than of the grace of this divine tongue. Homer's phrase for human speech, ἔπεα πτερόεντα, "winged words," is peculiarly true of Greek, with its variety of liquids, vowels, diphthongs, its gliding flow and twitter as of swallows on their flight, its garrulous profusion of reiterated particles. The blending of long and sonorous, yet never heavy, words with short and lightly feathered monosyllables—the perfect balance and even distribution of consonants and vowels—the richly developed accidence and syntax of the language—its three genders—the singular, dual, and plural numbers of its declined nouns—the complicated conjugation of its verbs, and the copiousness of their forms—all these qualities of a still youthful and prolific organ of speech endow Greek eloquence with unique pliability, rendering it no less fit for the simplicity of Simonidean epigraphy than for the rolling thunders of Demosthenic oratory.

We do not know how the Greek poets declaimed their verses. Having no clue to the antique pronunciation of the language and no correct sense of its accentual values, we feel their music with the eye rather than the ear, and lay an exaggerated stress on quantity. Yet such is the indestructibility of form and rhythm in verbal harmonies fashioned for the utterance of noble thoughts, that even while labouring under these disadvantages, we are able to appreciate the grand manner of Greek style.

> ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον, ὦ κατασκαφὴς
> οἴκησις ἀείφρουρος, οἷ πορεύομαι
> πρὸς τοὺς ἐμαυτῆς, ὧν ἀριθμὸν ἐν νεκροῖς
> πλεῖστον δέδεκται φερσέφασσ' ὀλωλότων·
> ὧν λοισθία 'γω καὶ κάκιστα δὴ μακρῷ
> κάτειμι, πρίν μοι μοῖραν ἐξήκειν βίου.

In reading this passage we need not summon imagination to our aid, nor bring before our mental eye the scene of Antigone advancing to her bridal bed in Hades. It is enough to feel the music of those opening lines, deep-toned and mellow as

the chords of viols. Then take the declamatory swiftness of a wrathful adjuration:

> τί δῆτα δόξης, ἤ τί κληδόνος καλῆς
> μάτην ῥεούσης ὠφέλημα γίγνεται,
> εἰ τάς γ' Ἀθήνας φασὶ θεοσεβεστατας
> εἶναι, μόνας δὲ τὸν κακούμενον ξένον
> σώζειν οἵας τε καὶ μόνας ἀρκεῖν ἔχειν;
> κἄμοιγε ποῦ ταῦτ' ἐστὶν, οἵτινες βάθρων
> ἐκ τῶνδέ μ' ἐξάραντες εἶτ' ἐλαύνετε,
> ὄνομα μόνον δείσαντες; οὐ γὰρ δὴ τό γε
> σῶμ' οὐδὲ πᾶργα τἄμ'· ἐπεὶ τά γ' ἔργα μου
> πεπονθότ' ἐστὶ μᾶλλον ἢ δεδρακότα,
> εἴ σοι τὰ μητρὸς καὶ πατρὸς χρείη λέγειν,
> ὧν οὕνεκ' ἐκφοβεῖ με. τοῦτ' ἐγὼ καλῶς
> ἴξοιδα.

Had we known nothing of Œdipus and his impendent doom, the rhetoric of this keen indignant invective would be felt in its fierce volubility and broken pauses—the alternation of verses wrought in monosyllables with verses of long billowy words—the compressed force of crasis and elision rapidly exchanged for the same verbal elements deployed with full syllabic emphasis.

I have observed that ponderosity is not the note of Greek eloquence. Yet two great poets, early in this literature, revealed the possibilities of a massive Greek style. These were Pindar and Æschylus. Pindar builds with blocks of words in the manner of Cyclopean masonry.

> τὰς δὲ Θεοξένου ἀκτῖνας προσώπου μαρμαριζοίσας δρακείς
> ὃς μὴ πόθῳ κυμαίνεται, ἐξ ἀδάμαντος
> ἢ σιδάρου κεχάλκευται μέλαιναν καρδίαν
> ψυχρᾷ φλογί.

Carrying on this figure of architectural structure, we might point out that Pindar uses hardly any mortar; dispenses with the connecting particles, prepositions, expletives, in which Greek style is usually redundant; works by collocation of huge wedge-like phrases.

The massiveness of Æschylus assumes a different form.

Aristophanes described that manner in a passage of the "Frogs," which shows that Attic taste regarded it already as archaic:

> *ἔσται δ' ἱππολόφων τε λόγων κορυθαίολα νείκη,*
> *σχινδαλάμων τε παραξόνια, σμιλεύματά τ' ἔργων,*
> *φωτὸς ἀμυνομένου φρενοτέκτονος ἀνδρὸς*
> *ῥήμαθ' ἱπποβάμονα.*
> *φρίξας δ' αὐτοκόμου λυφιᾶς λασιαύχενα χαίταν,*
> *δεινὸν ἐπισκύνιον ξυνάγων βρυχώμενος ἤσει*
> *ῥήματα γομφοπαγῆ, πινακηδὸν ἀποσπῶν*
> *γηγενεῖ φυσήματι.*

This pomp, as of heavy cavalry charging with plumes in air and plunging horses, this effort, as of a Titan tearing bolted planks asunder and snorting in his labour, mark the Æschylean style, when the poet gives a free rein to the impulse of his "mighty line":

> *ἄ ἄ·*
> *δμωαὶ γυναῖκες, αἵδε Γοργόνων δίκην*
> *φαιοχίτωνες καὶ πεπλεκτανημέναι*
> *πυκνοῖς δράκουσιν.*

Of such sort are the ponderous iambics, struggling beneath their Marathonian panoply:

> *ἀλλ' οὔ καρανιστῆρες ὀφθαλμώρυχοι.*

Æschylus proves that Greek could be voluminous as well as voluble. But in his hands the style was not always pushed to the extreme of emphasis and exaggeration. Tragic solemnity of diction reaches the height of massive yet elastic energy in Cassandra's prophetic speeches delivered at the gate of Agamemnon's palace. These are the sublimest examples of dramatic poetry bequeathed to us by antiquity. They are certainly unique in Greek literature for verbal weight combined with fiery movement.

The Athenians refused to follow the leading of either Pindar or Æschylus. The ironical, analytical, dialectical instinct of the people drew them aside to other issues. Just as sculpture,

after emerging from archaic clumsiness, passed rapidly through the heroic beauty of Pheidias to the elegance and grace of Praxiteles—just as architecture refined upon the Doric column in the Parthenon, and introduced the slender Ionic type—so literary style grew lighter and more delicate as years advanced. The gravity of Sophocles has less of volume than the gravity of his great predecessor. These lines from the "Antigone" reveal the tragic manner at its purest, in its most characteristically Attic form:

οὐ γάρ τί μοι Ζεὺς ἦν ὁ κηρύξας τάδε
οὐδ' ἡ ξύνοικος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη·
οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ᾠόμην τὰ σὰ
κηρύγμαθ' ὥστ' ἄγραπτα κάσφαλῆ θεῶν
νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ' ὑπερδραμεῖν.
οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κἀχθὲς, ἀλλ' ἀεί ποτε
ζῇ ταῦτα, κοὐδείς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου 'φάνη.

It is upon passages like these that Euripides seems to have formed his style; that limpid and lucid flow of words, which is so sweet and musical, so plastic and so melancholy:

τίς δ' οἶδεν, εἰ ζῆν τοῦθ', ὃ κέκληται θανεῖν,
τὸ ζῆν δὲ θνήσκειν ἐστί· πλὴν ὅμως βροτῶν
νοσοῦσιν οἱ βλέποντες, οἱ δ' ὀλωλοτες
οὐδὲν νοσοῦσιν, οὐδὲ κέκτηνται κακά.

The Greeks, especially the Attic Greeks, were a nation of talkers and public speakers. In the Lesché, the Agora, the Palæstra, the Pnyx, the Dikasterion, they carried on their intellectual life. Afterwards, they met again for discussion and colloquy at banquets and wine-parties. These habits affected their prose style, which was apt to be declamatory and conversational—rarely meditative. It is never impressive by profound suggestions. It lacks mystery—the mystery of brooding and indwelling thought. We cannot mention a Greek of the good period, who wrote as though he were writing for himself and truth, without relation to an audience. The histories of Herodotus and Thucydides were planned for recitation. The philosophical works of the Socratic school

assumed the form of dialogue. Prose, under these conditions, failed to attain the perfection which might have been expected from the language and the genius of the race. It displayed weaknesses inherent in the flexibility of the Greek speech, and in the sociability of those who used it. Fluid, glittering, versatile, attractive—anything but sternly earnest, heart-felt, monumental—Attic prose forecasts the advent of the *Græculus esuriens.* Even the golden periods of Plato suffer from loquacity, a twittering reiteration of γὰρ and γοῦν and μὲν and δὲ, a conversational expansiveness, a superfluous use of expletives, a disproportion between the thing said and the way of saying it. Much may be conceded to Plato's dramatic aim, and no man of taste would wish for alteration in the diction of such masterpieces as the "Republic," the "Symposium," and the "Phædrus." As specimens of a peculiar kind of literary art, they are unassailable, preserving with peculiar felicity the very form and pressure of the times they represent. Still, they reveal an element of weakness in the juvenile Greek language—its talkative facility, its want of massy weight and pregnant suggestiveness. This defect through them becomes the more apparent, because they are the supreme examples of the quality in style to which Greek prose aspired.

Aristotle was far less gifted as a stylist than his master. In his hands Greek prose lost its charm of adolescent beauty. At the same time it ceased to be garrulous. By his method of scientific analysis and by his coinage of technical terms, Aristotle exercised more influence over the language of philosophy than Plato did; and, when he passed away, the genius of the race had already lost its fresh, creative faculty. The Greeks continued for centuries to display inexhaustible fertility in the manipulation of their plastic speech to suit the subtlest shades of thought. This power gave them an empire over the creeds, the logic, the diurnal diction of Christendom But they could not produce a prose style worthy of Hellas.

I will not except the orators from this criticism. Wonderful as are the burning floods of eloquence in Demosthenes, the long-wrought periods conducted to a fiery close, the march of his phalanxed arguments, the pungent sting of his sarcasm, and the sublimity of his appeals to human or to patriotic feeling, Demosthenes did not found a solid prose style. The study of rhetoric, when it left the bema for the academy, encouraged the worst vices of Attic literature. It diverted attention from matter to manner, and ended in the wire-drawn conceits of the later sophists.

When we reflect upon Greek style, we return to Homer's phrase: ἔπεα πτερόεντα. The words of the language were too winged—too swift, perchance, for poetry of the severest order —too light and feathered for the purposes of monumental prose.

III.

The passage from Greek to Latin is like passing from a paradise of flowers and fruit trees to a region of tilth and pasture, from the boyhood of demigods to the adult manhood of heroic mortals. Language has advanced further from its primitive exuberance. Latin has no dual, no aorist, no middle voice, no verbs in μι. It is deficient in the otiose particles which made the Greek speech garrulous, retaining only such conjunctions and prepositions as are strictly needful for the logical coherence of sentences. It has dropped the definite article, which contributes so much to the lightness of Greek. No language of the same family is more parsimonious than Latin in the means employed for utterance. None relies for its rhetorical and logical effect more boldly upon the declension of nouns and participles, the inflection of verbs, and the collocation of vocables. Greek superfluities have disappeared; the auxiliaries of modern languages have only partially begun to sprout. Economy is exhibited in every element of this athletic tongue. Like a naked gladiator, all bone and muscle, it relies upon bare sinewy strength. Having preserved

genders, Latin is able to dispense with the indefinite article, trusting to the cadence of nouns, adjectives, and participles for the structure of its propositions. Since pronouns are not demanded as subjects of the Latin verb, the appearance of them becomes rhetorically emphatic:

Multis *ille* bonis flebilis occidit. . . .
Tempora mutantur *nos* et mutamur in illis.

As a consequence of these peculiarities, Latin is the monumental language, the language of lapidary inscription, of proverb and of epigram, of terse sentences and legal edicts. It is also the oratorical language, abounding in sonorous words of *ositas* and *atio*, and long reverberating verbs in the subjunctive mood. The consonants are more closely packed and carry greater weight than in the Greek; still the vowel sounds are deep, open, and plentifully distributed. It would be difficult to match the following line for opulence in any other literature:

Spargens humida mella soporiferumque papaver.

The Greek, as we have learned from Pindar, could do much by massive building, by the juxtaposition of words in blocks; but Latin could do more. There is a pregnancy of rhetoric in the antithesis of verb and noun which only Latin properly developed. Without loss of dignity, sentences can be constructed in this language which carry the packed meaning of logogriphs:

Stat crux dum volvitur orbis.

Latin is not voluble, and rarely rapid; yet a master can make it run in liquid numbers, with a slumberous or a melancholy flow, as of some soft-sliding stream:

Inter arundineasque comas gravidumque papaver,
Et tacitos sine labe lacus sine murmure rivos.

The use of *que*, and the force gained by the omission of the pronoun, are beautifully illustrated by the following example:

Tempora labuntur tacitisque senescimus annis.

In English the pathos of the line would have to be impaired by the weakness of a separate *and,* and the necessary introduction of the short word *we.* The most felicitous renderings of memorable Latin lines into English reveal the superiority of the classical language in qualities of monumental repose. Virgil wrote:

Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.

The Roman obtained his effect of lapsing waters by simple quantities of sound. Dryden translates the verse—and it is one of his triumphs of metaphrase—thus:

He flows, and, as he flows, for ever will flow on.

The Briton substitutes for pure sound-quantity the hurry of monosyllables, and appeals to the intellectual imagination rather than the verbal sense. Some rhetorical strokes in Latin can be reproduced in no other language. Try as we may, we shall not render the force of such a line as this:

Intolerabilius nihil est quam femina dives—

where the passion of the speaker is symbolised in the first emphatic long word, and the sting of his satire is conveyed by the clinching spondee at its close.

In the noble blending of long words with short, the rejection of superfluities, and the dependence upon verbal collocation for the expression of logical meaning, Latin is unrivalled among languages. Whatever Greek could do (and Greek did many things beyond the scope of Latin), no Greek poet, except Sappho, produced stanzas of the same stationary and yet moving dignity as these:

Atqui sciebat quæ sibi barbarus
Tortor pararet: non aliter tamen
Dimovit obstantes propinquos
Et populum reditus morantem,
Quam si clientum longa negotia,
Dijudicata lite, relinqueret,
Tendens Venafranos in agros
Aut Lacedæmonium Tarentum.

The foregoing paragraphs betray no slender admiration for the Latin language as an organ of style. If I may introduce a personal confession, it is to this effect: that in proportion as I have grown in years and in reflection on the art of writing—passing away from youth, and soberly testing enthusiasms awakened by first contact with the divine Greek imagination—I have grown to appreciate with deeper reverence the austere and masculine virtues of Latin, the sincerity and brevity of Roman speech, the nervous grip with which that language grasps thought, and the pomp of more than Oriental draperies with which its eloquence envelops it, when the haughty genius of the race condescends to ornament and methods of rhetorical persuasion.

It is not, in the case of Latin, that sweetness distils from strength, like honey from the famous jaws of Samson's lion. There is little enough of pure sweetness in that literature. What sugared drops we find are scarcely native to the soil, but stolen from the hives of subtle Hellas. I would rather say that in the clanging periods of Roman eloquence, in the solemn march of Livy's historical narration, in the stabbing epigrams of Tacitus, in the swollen torrent-cry of Juvenal's invective, in the oceanic ebb and flow of Lucretian hexameters, the stubborn nudity of Latin clothes itself with gorgeous paludaments, which it wears like a conqueror, and trails in the dust of the imperial city like a general on his path to Capitolian Jove. That investiture of naked strength with studied oratorical magnificence is the supreme achievement of the Roman genius in style. And the indifference with which the trappings of purple and of gold are carried, the brutality of the underlying thought, the solid concrete of the road on which the triumphal chariots travel, add to the impressiveness of this majestic Roman manner.

The ruins of the Parthenon are unapproachable in loveliness, crowning the sacred hill on which a virgin goddess in the world's young prime descended. They enchant us with

a revelation of divine harmony and immortal beauty. The ruins of the Pont du Gard, bridging the broad valley of the Gardon, uplifted high in air, with no charm of form, no appeal to the æsthetic sense, conceding nothing to nature and claiming nothing from environment; these Roman ruins enthrall the imagination with a different but not less potent magic.

We cannot surmise what Latin literature might have produced if it had not submitted to Greek models. The religion of the Romans shows them to have been deficient in the first constituent of national poetry, an imaginative mythology. We are, therefore, so far justified in believing that the assimilative instinct of their artists was a right one. Yet how firmly did the Roman spirit grasp whatever things it touched!

> Excudent alii spirantia mollius æra,
> Credo equidem vivos ducent de marmore vultus;
> Orabunt causas melius, cœlique meatus
> Describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent:
> Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento;
> Hæ tibi erunt artes: pacisque imponere morem,
> Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.

The poet who in proud humility and candid sense of fact uttered these words of condescending withdrawal from the lesser fields of empire, exercised a lordlier influence over the last nineteen centuries of civilisation than any poet of the Greeks did; and the language used by Virgil passed into the mother speech of modern nations, and controlled their style in its formation.

Latin had the defects of its qualities, and these were very different from those of Greek literature in the decadence. It remained rigid, unpliable, stubbornly representative of a warlike and administrative race, in spite of the polish added by its Hellenistic artists. The chief difficulty with which this language had to contend was its intellectual inflexibility, its impermeability, its resistance to ideas. The Greek vocabu-

lary proved itself adequate to every step in speculative thought. It clothed the figments of metaphysic, as it had clothed the fancies of mythology, with specious forms, all plastic and all beautiful. We have therefore perhaps to be thankful that the books of the New Testament and the theology of the first Christian centuries were entrusted to the waning genius of Hellas. Catholic dogma might have been more jejune and sterile than it is, had it been first handled by Romans instead of Hellenists. As it was, the ruthlessness of Latin exposed the plausibility of Greek, whenever the two languages were brought into close contact. But Christianity became the Empire's creed. The Roman genius, born to rule and bent on ruling, adopted and gave world-currency to metaphysical ideas which were but inadequately represented in the Latin speech.

IV.

What the Latin Church had undertaken, and what the Latin tongue was destined to perform during the years which preceded and the centuries which followed the dissolution of the Empire, can only be understood by tracing the development of the language under these altered conditions.

The date 395 A.D. marks one of the most important epochs in world-history. In this year the Emperor Theodosius died, and the Roman realm was finally divided into Eastern and Western. After the lapse of less than a century, the share which fell to his second son Honorius, Cæsar of the West, devolved upon barbarian chiefs, never again to be reunited with the patrimony of his elder son Arcadius. In the year 395, the three builders-up of Latin Christianity, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, were still alive. Augustine, the youngest, had recently been consecrated Bishop of Hippo. Jerome was finishing his translation of the Bible in a monastery at Bethlehem. Ambrose, the great Archbishop of Milan, who, five years earlier, repulsed Theodosius from the doors of

his cathedral, reminding the lord of the terraqueous globe that Christ was above Cæsar, had two more years to live. These three men are justly reverenced as fathers and founders of Latin Christendom. Their work was destined to endure for better or for worse, deepening and defining that intellectual separation of West from East, of Roman from Byzantine ways of thought, which showed itself politically in the partition of the Empire between the two heirs of Theodosius.

Thus no period of time was more pregnant for the future of the Occidental races than the close of the fourth century after Christ. The waning lights of paganism mingle with the waxing lights of Christendom. Classical civility comes to an end; the stuff of the modern world is prepared by the intrusion of barbaric tribes and northern hordes into the comity of nations. Claudian, the last pagan poet of the classical type, celebrates the apotheosis of Christian Theodosius in voluble hexameters. Ambrose, at the same moment, invents hymns for the Church at Milan in rhythms which already demand rhyme, and need only the addition of rhyme to be mediæval. "Quantum flevi in hymnis et canticis ecclesiæ tuæ!" writes Augustine of these sacred songs, with a touch of emotion which is wholly modern. Jerome, adapting the Latin tongue to Oriental thought and imagery, creates a new instrument of verbal utterance in the prose of the Vulgate.

The Vulgate is undoubtedly the chief monument of the mental transformation I am tracing. This resurrection of a new organ of style—for we can hardly call it less—from the grave where Cicero and Tacitus and Livy lay embalmed, is one of the most singular phenomena in history. Too little attention has hitherto been paid to the extraordinary plasticity of Latin in the decline of antique civilisation. Responding to altered spiritual conditions, Jerome clad the Roman strength of speech with Asiatic pomp, bent its imperial stiffness to Greek subtlety, drew from its iron chords

the melodies of Syrian lyres and harping hallelujahs of apocalyptic ecstasy. At the moment when classical style was expiring in the conceits and reminiscences of poets like Ausonius, a fresh and varied style appeared, adapted in its elasticity and plangent music to the utterance of modern emotion. And while the instrument of prose was being reconstructed thus, metre discarded quantity for accent, invented new rhythms and new stanzas, adopted the ornament of rhyme.

The Vulgate is so all-important in this change of national style, which prepared the Latin language to be the cosmopolitan vehicle of expression in Europe during the next nine hundred years, that I may be pardoned for exhibiting its prose by illustrations. With any passage of Cicero, or Livy, or Quintilian, in our minds, let us read the following extracts:

Post haec aperuit Job os suum, et maledixit diei suo, et locutus est.

Pereat dies in qua natus sum, et nox in qua dictum est: conceptus est homo.

Dies ille vertatur in tenebras, non requirat eum Deus desuper, et non illustretur lumine.

Obscurent eum tenebræ et umbra mortis, occupet eum caligo, et involvatur amaritudine.

Noctem illam tenebrosus turbo possideat, non computentur in diebus annis, nec numereatur in mensibus.

Sit nox illa solitaria, nec laude digna:

maledicant ei qui maledicunt diei, qui parati sunt suscitare leviathan:

Obtenebrentur stellæ caligine ejus: expectet lucem et non videat, nec ortum surgentis auroræ:

Quia non conclusit ostia ventris qui portavit me, non abstulit mala ab oculis meis.

Quare non in vulva mortuus sum, egressus ex utero non statim perii?

Quare exceptus genibus? Cur lactatus uberibus?

Nunc enim dormiens silerem, et somno meo requiescerem:

Cum regibus et consulibus terræ, qui ædificant sibi solitudines:

Aut cum principibus, qui possident aurum et replent domos suas argento:

Aut sicut abortivum absconditum non subsisterem, vel qui concepti non viderunt lucem.

Ibi impii cessaverunt a tumultu, et ibi requiescunt fessi robore.

Like the chords of penitential psalms, chanted by male voices in the gloom of cathedral choirs, the deep reverberations of these weighty Latin words go rolling through the cavernous aisles of the mysterious mediæval period.

Veni de Libano sponsa mea, veni de Libano, veni : Coronaberis de capite Amana, de vertice Sani et Hermon, de cubilibus leonum, de montibus pardorum.

Vulnerasti cor meum soror mea sponsa, vulnerasti cor meum in uno oculorum tuorum et in uno crine colli tui.

Quam pulchræ sunt mammæ tuæ soror mea sponsa ! pulchriora sunt ubera tua vino, et odor unguentorum tuorum super omnia aromata.

Favus distillans labia tua sponsa, mel et lac sub lingua tua : et odor vestimentorum tuorum sicut odor thuris.

Hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa, hortus conclusus, fons signatus.

Emissiones tuæ paradisus malorum punicorum cum pomorum fructibus. Cypri cum nardo ;

Nardus et crocus, fistula et cinnamonum cum universis lignis Libani, myrrha et aloë cum omnibus primis unguentis.

Fons hortorum : puteus aquarum viventium, quæ fluunt impetu de Libano.

Surge aquilo, et veni auster, perfla hortum meum, et fluant aromatata illius.

Like the breaking of an alabaster box of precious ointment, like the tossing up of heavy-perfumed censers ; so the penetrating odours of this prose, artless in style, oppressive in passionate suggestion, float abroad through all the convents and the churches of the centuries to come, laden with languors of mystic love, pregnant with poetry undreamed of on the banks of the Tiber or Ilissus. The Latin of the Canticles aspires toward music, and will exhale in sound when Palestrina wakes the master art of modern times.

Una enim catena tenebrarum omnes erant colligati. Sive spiritus sibilans, aut inter spissos arborum ramos avium sonus suavis, aut vis aquæ decurrentis nimium,

Aut sonus validus præcipitatarum petrarum, aut ludentium animalium cursus invisus, aut mugientium valida bestiarum vox, aut resonans de altissimis montibus echo : deficientes faciebant illos præ timore.

Omnis enim orbis terrarum limpido illuminabatur lumine, et non impeditus operibus continebatur.

Solis autem illis superposita erat gravis nox, imago tenebrarum, quæ superventura illis erat. Ipsi ergo sibi erant graviores tenebris.

Like the darkness of the Dark Ages—the darkness which deepened until the pulse of human life well-nigh stopped, and men sat still with indrawn breath, waiting for the midnight bell to toll the advent of the year of doom—these groaning Latin sentences diffuse a sinister obscurity, and symbolise the gloom in which the nations walked, while "the whole world shined with clear light, and none were hindered in their labour," but the minds of men wore night around them, and terrified their souls with self-created shadows.

What strikes us most in this new style is the dissolution of the previous periodic structure of sentences, and the addition of a hitherto unapprehended colour-value to the rich sonority of ample Latin verbs and nouns. Writers of hymns in rhyme presently availed themselves of these peculiarities. The noble blending of long and short words, which we noticed in a quotation from Horace, now came to be employed with different purpose. It gave singular majesty to the religious emotion of stanzas like the following:

Dum me mori est necesse,
Noli mihi tunc deesse :
In tremenda mortis hora
Veni Jesu absque mora ;
Tuere me et libera.
Cum me jubes emigrare,
Jesu care tunc appare ;
O amator amplectende,
Temet ipsum tunc ostende
In cruce salutifera.

We have travelled far away from Regulus. Is it possible that the language should be called the same?

The Vulgate—the word of God divulged, translated from its Hebrew and its Greek into Latin for the common people of the Western world—what a success this book of Jerome's had, and how it modified and moulded all the silent centuries that made us what we are! No other *vulgarisateur* has done

a millionth part of what S. Jerome did. Luther, Tyndal, Diodati, the innumerable scribes of the Bible Society, have spread abroad the sacred writings of the Jewish and the Christian Church. Into each nation where these versions penetrate, they bring a great and powerful tradition. Many of them, the earlier in each case, rank as monuments of style. Eleven centuries after the death of Jerome, two youthful nations, the English and the German, became vocal for the first time in vernacular translations of the Bible, and based the rules of written language on their precedents. But what was this in comparison with Jerome's work? His Bible scattered and displaced the classics, erased the memories of Rome and insolent Greece, undid Olympus, brought the wrecks of the old world and the nebulous elements of the modern world, Celts, Teutons, Norsemen, Goths, and what not, into relation with the penetrative secrets of the Oriental mind, the potent metaphysic of the Greek.

There is a book, steeped in the style of the Vulgate, which possesses peculiar value as a link between the ancient and the modern world. I mean the "Confessions" of S. Augustine. Nothing like it had appeared before, so far as we have knowledge of antiquity. No self-revelation of a human soul had hitherto been made with such free confidence. Nowhere else could the same introspective analysis of doubts and motives and desires be found. Subjectivity had never spoken out so candidly, with less reserve, with less regard to artistic or rhetorical effect. The distinguishing note of this book is that the author of it has found his true self in God, and pours his heart out to the God who understands him. In this respect, S. Augustine anticipates the movement of the modern world, and inaugurates a literature which only started into plenitude of being nine centuries after his death in the body. So tardy is the evolution of the human mind.

S. Augustine paints in his "Confessions" the entire life of his hybrid epoch: a pagan father and a Christian mother;

the schools of African grammarians and Italian rhetoricians; the baths; the Carthaginian circus stained with blood, the lawless lives of Roman cities; the church at Milan and its perils, the origin of monastic societies and the first beginnings of ecclesiastical music; conversions to the Christian faith, baptisms, pagan honours paid to tombs of martyrs; Manichean, Pelagian, Neoplatonic, Arian heresies. We are introduced to men wavering between philosophy and faith, Athens and Jerusalem, uncertain which path to follow. We watch Latin Christianity in the making; and the man who relates all this is one who powerfully helped to fix its outlines. The "Confessions" paint the second half of the fourth century in the spirit and the manner of a modern artist. Their style possesses corresponding interest, because, although Augustine was himself a celebrated professor of rhetoric, his diction is anything but classical. We find no trace of that laborious attempt to reproduce the phrases and recapture the rhythms of past literature, which marks the poetry of Claudian and Ausonius. Augustine speaks in the new language, the Latin which was moulding itself on Christian lines of thought for modern uses.

The famous passage which describes Augustine's passion of sorrow upon the death of a dearly beloved friend might be chosen as an adequate example of this new style:

Quo dolore contenebratum est cor meum; et quicquid adspiciebam, mors erat. Et erat mihi supplicium, et paterna domus mira infelicitas; et quidquid cum illo communicaveram, sine illo in cruciatum immanem verterat. Expetebant eum undique oculi mei, et non dabatur mihi; et oderam omnia, quia non haberent eum; nec mihi jam dicere poterant: ecce veniet, sicut cum viveret, quando absens erat. Factus eram ipse mihi magna quæstio, et interrogabam animam meam quare tristis esset, et quare conturbaret me valde; et nihil noverat respondere mihi. Et si dicebam: spera in Deum, juste non obtemperabat; quia verior erat et melior homo, quem carissemum amiserat, quam phantasma, in quod sperare jubebatur. Solus fletus erat dulcis mihi, et successerat amico meo in deliciis animi mei.—Et nunc, Domine, jam illa transierunt, et tempore lenitum est vulnus meum.

It would be delightful to linger in quotations over the plangent melody of S. Augustine's prose, so resonant with the modern cry of emotion;

Quo vobis adhuc et adhuc ambulare vias difficiles et laboriosas? Non est requies, ubi quæritis eam. Quærite quod quæritis; sed ibi non est, ubi quæritis. Beatam vitam quæritis in regione mortis: non est illic.

But enough has been cited to indicate the style of the "Confessions." This style fell, like every form of culture, into decay during the Middle Ages. But when the Revival of Learning began, it was not so much from Cicero as from Augustine that the founder of humanism drew inspiration and borrowed his manner. Petrarch adored Cicero, but he loved and felt at home with Augustine. To Augustine, as to a bosom friend, he confided the troubles of his own heart in the dialogues entitled "Secretum." The "Confessions" were for him *scaturientes lachrymis Confessionum libri*—pages running over with the fount of tears. When he climbed the Mont Ventoux with his brother Gherardo in 1336, this book was in his pocket. Lying there, with the Alps outstretched before him and the Rhone majestically sweeping toward the sea, he drew it forth, and by an accident similar to that which happened to Augustine with Alypius in their garden at Milan, his eyes chanced to fall upon this suggestive passage:

Et eunt homines admirari alta montium et ingentes fluctus maris, et latissimos lapsus fluminum, et oceani ambitum, et gyros siderum, et relinquunt se ipsos.

And men go abroad to gaze with wonder at the heights of mountains and the mighty billows of the deep, and the lordly width of rivers flowing down, and the circuit of ocean, and the revolutions of the stars, and leave themselves unheeded.

Few things are more touching in the history of literature than this spiritual comradeship—Petrarch clasping hands with Augustine across the Lethe of nine mediæval centuries; the last man of the classic age and the first man of the modern mingling their souls in sympathy of sentiment.

V.

Latin detains the analyst of national style, not without reason, seeing that this language is the parent of so many modern tongues and the mistress of all modern literature.

Italian might be regarded as a prolongation of Latin into a third period of existence. It retains some of the Roman qualities. Dante could write:

> Dopo la dolorosa rotta quando
> Carlo Magno perdè la santa gesta,
> Non sonò sì terribilmente Orlando.

Tasso made lines of sounding vocables like this:

> Immense solitudini d' arena.

Machiavelli used a pen of steel, writing with a compressed energy and simple regard for perspicuity which was worthy of an Augustan.

Monumental strength is not, however, the specific quality of the Italian language, and has rarely been aimed at by Italian writers. The abundance of definite and indefinite articles, the conjugation of verbs by auxiliaries, the frequency of terminations in *essero*, *ebbero*, *ossono*, give a languor and indecision to the style. Italian loiters and seems to hesitate. Its characteristic is not rapidity, not robustness. The beauty of liquid numbers and sonorous vowel-sounds makes it the language of melody, and gives to the best Italian rhythms the charm of a sustained *cantilena*.

I observed above, that the languages which exhibit the highest capacity for style are those which combine loyalty to their native traditions with plasticity, becoming with each successive phase of culture more perfect instruments for the expression of those ideas which are gradually introduced into the common stock of civilisation. Now this is what the Italian language has hitherto missed. Italian writers have failed to cultivate the language on its plastic side, and

to keep it duly open to the influx of ideas. The result is that Italian, in spite of its fine quality and classic finish, does not take a very high rank as an organ of style.

This is due to accidents of growth, which find no exact parallel in the history of any other nation. Long before French attained to fixity, and while English was lisping in the cradle, Italian produced a monumental poem, the "Divine Comedy." Then followed Petrarch and Boccaccio, giving exquisite form, in verse and prose, to the vernacular of mediæval Tuscany. The Revival of Learning directed attention to antique masterpieces, and interrupted the natural development of the mother tongue. When poets like Poliziano and Ariosto, prose idyllists like Sannazzaro, men of letters like Bembo, historians like Machiavelli and Guicciardini, resumed Italian for the serious work of literature, the spirit of the age already turned to criticism. Dialects flourished in every province, and humanism supplied the common culture of the nation. It was thought necessary to imitate the Tuscan classics—Petrarch for verse and Boccaccio for prose—in order to obtain one type of style for the scattered members of the Italian family. Thus, writers who aimed at correctness began already to look backward at a time when the intellectual conditions of Europe demanded a free forward movement. After the close of the sixteenth century Italian literature was either scholarly, jejune, stiff, and empty of ideas, because it followed models which were out of harmony with the advance of modern thought; or it was capricious, fantastic, and *barocco*, because it tried to innovate within the same narrow sphere of style.

Only men of the highest natural endowments could move freely and express contemporary thought and feeling in diction which had been so artificially and critically elaborated. At the beginning of this century Leopardi handled his mother tongue in verse and prose with greater mastery than any other writer of that age. It may therefore be well to select

passages from his works which illustrate this classic style in its perfection.

Più volte io mi maraviglio meco medesimo come, ponghiamo caso, Virgilio, esempio supremo di perfezione agli scrittori, sia venuto e mantengasi in questa sommità di gloria. Perocchè, quantunque io presuma poco di me stesso, e creda non poter mai godere e conoscere ciascheduna parte d' ogni suo pregio e d' ogni suo magistero ; tuttavia tengo per certo che il massimo numero de' suoi lettori e lodatori non iscorge ne' poemi suoi più che una bellezza per ogni dieci o venti che a me, con molto rileggerli e meditarli, viene pur fatto di scoprirvi. In vero io mi persuado che l' altezza della stima e della rivevenza verso gli scrittori sommi, provenga comunemente, in quelli eziandio che li leggono e trattano, piuttosto da consuetudine ciecamente abbracciata, che da giudizio proprio e dal conoscere in quelli per veruna guisa un merito tale.

It is impossible to overrate the art displayed in the construction of this paragraph—the ease with which the periods are kept in hand, the balance of the clauses, and the harmony of the cadences. Yet we are left with an impression of cumbrous labour and circumlocution. The style seems stationary, as though it could with difficulty be made to move along. The thought is inadequate to the verbal machinery which has been set going for its utterance.

In poetry the case is different:

Che fai tu, luna, in ciel? dimmi, che fai,
Silenziosa luna ?
Sorgi la sera, e vai
Contemplando i deserti ; indi ti posi.
Ancor non sei tu paga
Di rïandare i sempiterni calli ?
Ancor non prendi a schivo, ancor sei vaga
Di mirar queste valli ?

There we have the supreme beauty of Italian verse—the sustained *cantilena* of words which naturally sing and fall into apparently inevitable rhythm. The poet seems to be merely speaking. But the music is so clear, the movement of the lines of varying length is so majestic, the thought is so perspicuous, that we seek no higher satisfaction of the intellectual senses.

This noble manner of Leopardi could not lend itself to light or rapid effects. It remains meditative, and culminates in passages like the following, which describes the poet's thoughts at night beneath the stars upon the lava of Vesuvius:

Sovente in queste piagge,
Che, desolate, a bruno
Veste il flutto indurato, e par che ondeggi,
Seggo la notte; e su la mesta landa
In purissimo azzurro
Veggo dall' alto fiammeggiar le stelle,
Cui di lontan fa specchio
Il mare, e tutto di scintille in giro
Per lo voto seren brillare il mondo.
E poi che gli occhi a quelle luci appunto,
Ch' a lor sembrano un punto,
E sono immense in guisa
Che un punto a petto a lor son terra e mare
Veracemente; a cui
L' uomo non pur, ma questo
Globo ove l' uomo è nulla,
Sconosciuto è del tutto: e quando miro
Quegli ancor più senz' alcun fin remoti
Nodi quasi di stelle,
Ch' a noi paion qual nebbia, a cui non l' uomo
E non la terra sol, ma tutte in uno,
Del numero infinite e della mole,
Cor l' aureo sole insiem, le nostre stelle
O sono ignote, o così paion come
Essi alla terra, un punto
Di luce nebulosa; al pensier mio
Che sembri allora, o prole
Dell' uomo?

This winding labyrinth of words is brought to a conclusion, as regards both sense and sound, so logically and so naturally that we hardly pause to wonder at the art of style, the suspension of thought, required for the achievement. It seems like the unpremeditated utterance of a divine being whose habitual speech is melody. And there is good foundation for this first impression. If we reflect upon the poetry which men like Heine and Matthew Arnold have produced in their attempts at unrhymed verse of varying lengths, we shall per-

ceive the incontestable superiority of Italian as a musical vehicle. The verbal artist cannot obtain similar results with German, French, or English. Italian largely owes its quality to what it has retained of Latin structure and of Latin collocation.

There is another circumstance which must not be neglected in the general survey of the growth of Italian style. The nation was not only divided by dialects and united mainly by a common tendency toward humanistic culture. It was also for several centuries deprived of free political life, a central capital, and a press adequate to the intellectual requirements of an expansive people. Neither by public speaking, nor by the conversation of enlightened coteries, nor yet by journalism, had the Italian language proper opportunities for unfolding its capacities and marching front to front with modern thought. Almost suddenly, within our lifetime, these disabilities were removed; and no sooner could Italy proclaim herself in fact a nation, than the classic style, of which Leopardi was so great a nineteenth century master, began to be displaced by revolutionary modes of expression which cause pain to the purists, and which no sane critic of language can regard as final. The difficulty under which a mother tongue, artificially and critically fashioned like Italian, suffers when it copes with ordinary affairs of modern life, is illustrated by the fabrication of feeble vocables like *panificio*, *birrificio*, *cottonificio*, and by newspaper jargon, of which the following sentence from a police-court report is only a fair specimen :

> Tosto avvenuto l' attentato la cameriera si è resa latitante e finora non si potè mettersi sulle tracce. L' ufficiale ieri stava molto male, tanto che vociferavasi fosse resa necessaria l' amputazione della mano.

With reference to the jingle of inharmonious and weakly phrases which are now invading the minor literature of Italy, I remember the late Duke of Sermoneta inveighing in my presence against the diction of the Chambers, its barbarous

neologisms, its total want of taste, its violation of the genius of the language. "Why cannot they use the golden speech of the fourteenth century?" he asked. "Everything can be expressed in Italian of that epoch." Alas, I thought to myself, *tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur.* Style which sufficed the writer of the "Fioretti di San Francesco" will not grapple with the exigencies of an age of scientific discoveries and crumbling theologies and social and political revolutions.

VI.

French, being an analytical language, is encumbered with auxiliary verbs, prepositions, explanatory and supplementary conjunctions—"les auxiliaires *avoir* et *être*, le verbe *faire*, les conjonctions encombrantes; toute cette pouillerie de notre prose française," as a French critic puts it. Compared with Italian, the vowel-sounds are poor, the volume and natural rhythm of the vocables mediocre. Compared with English, French lacks variety and compass. Compared with German, the vocabulary is limited; those concrete and suggestive words which give scope to the metaphysical imagination are wanting.

French might be described as the least endowed by nature of the European languages. It often happens, however, that when the soil is poor, industry and tillage succeed in raising finer crops than wave upon the fatter glebe of luckier neighbours. So the intelligent attention paid to style in France, and conscious and persistent cultivation of the language by refined thinkers, the usage of a society pervious to ideas, of a Court where dulness and grossness were accounted crimes, of academies devoted to the study of diction, of drawing-rooms in which piquancy of phrase gave point to conversation, of a capital electric with the brain-life of modern civility—this effort to attain perfection, carried on through centuries by an enlightened and exquisitely polished race, has rendered

French unrivalled in certain of the very highest qualities of verbal utterance.

Style is not so much a matter of linguistic resources, as of the art and tact with which those resources are husbanded for use. If the French are less liberally endowed than some of their neighbours, they have made more of the wealth at their disposal. Every word of their comparatively limited vocabulary has been vitalised, penetrated with suggestions, cut and polished like a diamond of many facets, imbued with psychological colour and association. The beauty of French style consists in the parsimony of the means employed, and the manifold variety produced by the manipulation of those means—the feeling for exact values whereby simple words are thrown into relief by juxtaposition and selection, the justice of perception which discovers the right phrase and sets it in precisely the right context, the strength which comes from reserve, and the flexibility which is due to unerring veracity of statement. In this way, some of the effects which might seem to have been denied to the French language—effects of picturesque and coloured description, effects of mystery, effects of aerial indistinctness and haunting sweetness—are just those in which it is at present unrivalled.

"La nature de cette langue," says Guy de Maupassant, "est d'être claire, logique et nerveuse." It is the language of logical precision, of lucidity and scientific accuracy, of intelligence, curiosity, criticism, propriety. "Elle ne se laisse pas affaiblir, obscurcir ou corrompre." It is the language of aphorism, of epigram, of definition, of psychological discrimination. Braced in the austere struggle after truth of utterance, purged by the pursuit of exactitude, taught to be satisfied with veracity of phrase, there is nothing subtle in thought or evanescent in sentiment which escapes the grasp of its fine nervous organ of expression.

This makes French the perfect instrument of prose ; not of sublime poetry, for that demands qualities which the language

has failed to develop; not, peradventure, of the noblest oratory, for that requires a density and volume incompatible with the transparency specific to French ways of thinking; but of written prose, inexhaustible in crisp variety of rhythm and elasticity of phrase, never unmindful of the laws which separate prose from metrical utterance.

"Cet art de la Prose française," exclaims Paul Bourget, in a passage from which I have already quoted, "héritage magnifique de la grande civilisation romaine. Le jour où cet art disparaîtrait, la conscience française serait bien malade, car dans l'ordre de l'intelligence elle aurait perdu sa plus indiscutable suprématie. Les langues se parlent sur toute la surface du monde; il est probable qu'il ne s'écrit qu'une seule prose, si l'on prend le mot dans le sens lapidaire et définitif où pouvait l'entendre un Tite-Live ou un Salluste; cette prose, c'est la nôtre. Inférieurs dans la poésie aux subtils et divins poètes Anglais, initiés à la musique par les maîtres allemands, et aux arts plastiques par nos voisins du midi, nous sommes les rois absolus de cette forme de la Phrase Écrite."

There is little to gainsay in this enthusiastic, yet carefully measured, vindication by a French writer of his nation's claim to supremacy. Tardily, perhaps, yet definitely, we English people have come to acknowledge our own inferiority *in the art of prose*, and the necessity we are under of learning the rules of that art from French masters.

When we proceed to consider style as a branch of rhetoric, it will be apparent what the phrase italicised above implies. For the present, I wish to invite comparison between a passage from M. Renan's translation of the Book of Job and the already quoted Latin of the Vulgate:

> Que ne suis-je mort dès le sein de ma mère,
> Au sortir de ses entrailles, que n'expirai-je!
>
> Pourquoi deux genoux sont-ils venus me recevoir,
> Et deux seins m'inviter à les sucer?

Maintenant je serais couché, je me reposerais,
Je dormirais dans une paix profonde,

Avec les rois et les grands de la terre,
Qui se bâtissent des mausolées,

Avec les princes qui possèdent l'or,
Et remplissent leur maison d'argent ;

Ou bien, comme l'avorton caché, je n'existerais pas,
Comme les enfans qui n'ont pas vu la lumière.

Là les méchants cessent leurs violences,
Là se repose l'homme épuisé.

This illustrates the limpidity and clearness of French style, its grace of simple outline ; but it also illustrates the want of majesty, the sacrifice of grandeur, which we notice in the French language when it competes with one more sombre and poetical. "Quelle joie pour Jacob, quelle allégresse pour Israël," in the French version of the Psalms, contrasts but poorly with our own, "Then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."

VII.

There is little in common between the languages of which we have been thinking and German—their Teutonic cousin in the Aryan family. The complicated syntax of German and its extraordinary richness render this language unrivalled for the disengagement and articulation of the minutest shades of thought. If natural resources and capacity for expression were sufficient to constitute style, then German literature ought to rank first among the literatures of Europe ; but the exact opposite is the fact. Like the Roman Commonwealth, in Livy's famous phrase, the German language "magnitudine laborat sua," it flounders in its own voluminousness. That it is both difficult and clumsy—*schwierig und schwerfällig*—even Germans, if they are candid, admit. Foreigners know, to their cost, that the perusal of an ordinary book of German erudition demands thrice the time and twice the expenditure

of brain-force which are required by a French treatise. This is partly due to the genius and history of the language, which, until quite recently, has had no pains bestowed upon its style. But it is even more the fault of German writers, who seem, as a rule, culpably indifferent to propriety and beauty of expression. Abandoning themselves to the facility of their native speech, revelling in its exuberance, abusing its plasticity, inventing neologisms, importing foreign phrases wholesale, they scribble without giving a thought to the art of diction, and apparently without caring for precision in their ideas. Whatever comes to the pen-point is put down on paper. If one cumbrous sentence fails to hit the mark, instead of blotting and remodelling, they produce a second and a third to modify the imperfect impression. The result is that serious thinkers are content to put forth simple thoughts in jargon like the following:

Es bleibt uns deshalb nichts übrig als den Begriff der Kunst so zu sagen lemmatisch aufzunehmen, was bei allen besonderen philosophischen Wissenschaften, wenn sie vereinzelt betrachtet werden sollen, der Fall ist. Denn erst die gesammte Philosophie ist die Erkenntniss des Universums als in sich eine organische Totalität, die sich aus ihrem eigenen Begriffe entwickelt, und in ihrer sich zu sich verhaltenden Nothwendigkeit zum Ganzen in sich zurückgebend, sich mit sich als eine Welt der Wahrheit zusammenschliesst. In der Krone dieser wissenschaftlichen Nothwendigkeit ist jeder einzelne Theil ebensosehr einer Seits ein in sich zurückkehsender Kreis, als er anderer Seits zugleich einen nothwendigen Zusammenhang mit anderen Gebieten hat, ein Rückwärts, aus dem er sich herleitet, wie ein Vorwärts, zu dem er selbst in sich sich weiter treibt, insofern er fruchtbar Anderes wieder aus sich erzeugt und für die wissenschaftliche Erkenntniss hervorgehen lässt.

This passage could not be translated literally into French; and the fact that it is incapable of conversion into style of absolute veracity justifies our entertaining grave doubts as to the soundness of its sense. When we succeed in grasping the meaning, however, we find that it conveys a not very original remark upon the relation of the subordinate branches of philosophy to science in general, which might have been briefly

and modestly set forth. But to have expressed this notion with French lucidity would have shorn the writer's thought of its hazy impressiveness. The verbiage of Hegel adds a kind of mystic grandeur, what the Greeks called σεμνοτής, to commonplace ideas enough; and his reckless abuse of the inexhaustible resources of the German language invests the cobwebs of the speculative fancy with something like a mythological concreteness.

The great strength of German lies in the unparalleled compass and wealth of its vocabulary. There is nothing which cannot be expressed in German by a native word, homely, picturesque, appealing straight to the intelligence alike of learned and unlearned. The phraseology of abstract thought is concrete here; it is also of native growth, not imported from the Greek or Latin. Instead of *incarnation*, Germans speak of *Fleischwerden* or *Verfleischung*. Instead of *relation*, *definition*, they use *Verhältniss*, *Bestimmung;* instead of *concept*, *Begriff*. Some of their philosophical expressions, such for instance as *Weltanschauung*, display an inimitable aptitude. Even the terms of physical science are not remote from common life. *Schwefel-säure* explains itself more easily than *Acidus Sulphuricus*.

Abstract disquisitions retain a vividness and picturesqueness in German, which they never had in any other literature but the Greek. We have, perhaps, to thank this quality of the language—what may be called the mythopoeic energy of its vocabulary—for the cloud-castle-realm of German metaphysics. Ideas and distinctions which have no sound basis in fact, and which are incapable of being expressed in a less imaginative speech, obtain a specious aspect of reality and impose upon the mind when clothed with phraseology so vital and so concrete.

The same verbal privileges render German an admirable vehicle for literal translation. Few turns of phrase and few metrical effects are incapable of imitation in this language.

The native genius of the tongue, however, is so alien to classic literature, that its ingenious versions from Greek and Latin have the appearance of rough plaster-casts, rather than of reproductions in some precious material. It is in dealing with the masterpieces of a cognate literature, with Shakespeare's plays for example, that the inexhaustible riches of the mother speech of Germany are best exhibited.

Considering the compass of German vocabulary and the plasticity of the language as an instrument of style, it is greatly to be deplored that average German writers are so slovenly in the construction of their sentences, and so indolent in their adoption of foreign and inharmonious elements.[1] Carelessness, want of taste and tact, insensibility to form, contempt for the genius and specific beauty of the native idiom, seem to be ingrained vices of this literature. When we reflect on what good German style might be—what it has been in the hands of men like Heine, Schopenhauer, Helmholz—it is really irritating not to be able to take up a book without at once stumbling upon uglinesses like the following:

[1] I ran through two numbers of a local German newspaper the other day, and noted the following barbarisms: Konstatiren, konveniren, passiren, prosperiren, kompromettiren, blamiren, prämiren, projektiren, reformiren, publiziren, korrigiren, patronisen, kulmirinen, kursiren, präsidiren, Debatte, Diskussion, Direktion, Hotelier, Instruktor, Referat, Konkurrenz, Aktionär, Fraktionen, interressant, respektable, Konzessionär, Varianten, eventuell, konstant, seriös, Stationen, Accord, Tapet, Billet, splendid, Details, Honneurs. Some phrases were peculiarly offensive, as these: Diese auffällige Coincidencz, diese theatercoup mässige Inscenirung; Emission der Aktien; hindurchpilotirtes Projekt; Kompetentester; plausibeln Rentabilitätsberechnungen. It may be urged that these abominations are only discoverable in journalistic jargon. But newspapers form the principal literature of the middle and lower classes. Thus this commercial *patois* infiltrates common speech, and renders the talk of all but highly polished people insufferable. If we have to seek a valid excuse for the prevalent vulgarity of German prose, it should, perhaps, be found in the social backwardness of the German people. They need expressions which have become current through the usage of more cultivated nations, especially the French, and which carry connotations hitherto denied to their own Gothic vocabulary.

Bei einer intelligenten, sehr suggestiblen Wärterin wirkten die Suggestions à échéance so mächtig, dass sie mir erklärte, sie sei absolut überwältigt und wäre gezwungen, sogar einen Mord zu begehen, wenn ich ihr denselben suggeriren würde, so furchtbar sei der Trieb, auch den grössten Unsinn zu begehen.

It may be conceded that in an essay on Hypnotism, the French phrase *Suggestions à échéance* is appropriate by reason of its technical significance. Still we ask where is the necessity for *intelligent, suggestible, absolut, suggeriren?* Why was the verb *zu begehen* tautologically repeated in so short a sentence? Why could not a little pains have been bestowed on bettering the lame amorphous clauses on which it limps to a conclusion?

German prose, except in the case of a few rare stylists, suffers from unwieldiness, cumbrous garrulity, circumlocution, and painfully prolonged suspension of thought through labyrinths of qualifying clauses, parentheses, and otiose excrescences. But there is another aspect of the literature. In poetry and in simple narration it is not easy to match its spontaneous and artless beauties. Heine's lyrics, for example, have a lightness of touch, a purity of phrase, an irreproducible grace of rhythm and haunting melody, the exact parallel to which can nowhere else be found. The same qualities are noticeable in the Märchen and in tales which have been written in their manner. Sincere homeliness, deep, true emotion, penetrating to the root and marrow of the human heart, kindliness and honesty combined with shrewdness and a broad calm survey of the world, are the notes of this part of German literature. No other modern idiom has a set of words like *Gemüth, Innigkeit, fromm, bieder, hold,* expressive of the most lovable qualities of character. Their exact equivalents cannot be found in English, French, Italian. There is something idiosyncratic to German emotion and to German spiritual temperament in their form and sound.

VIII.

English is the most composite of modern languages, including as it does Teutonic, Celtic, Latin, and French elements in the body of the idiom. It is also reduced to the simplest grammatical form. Nouns are not declined ; genders, except for persons, have been discarded ; verbs are conjugated mainly by the help of auxiliaries. To say that English has no grammar would be an exaggeration. But it certainly has less of grammar than any other literary language.

The variety of its vocabulary and the simplicity of its grammar are two main advantages of English, rendering it full of verbal suggestiveness and manageable as an instrument of expression. Among its prominent drawbacks may be reckoned imperfect (though copious) vowel-sounds, the frequency of sibilants, and the wearisome recurrence of little words like *the, a, which, that, of.* Glad as we may be for many reasons to have abolished the genders of sexless things, we cannot but feel that a certain loss is involved in this simplification. Declined substantives, adjectives, articles, relatives, participles, animate the diction of both poetry and prose, and help to determine the logical order of sentences by means of their terminal forms.

Owing to the complicated pedigree of the English language, our metrical systems offer insurmountable difficulties to the analyst. We have to deal with verse which depends for its effect on accent rather than quantity, and in which two traditions—that of Anglo-Saxon rhythm and that of classical scansion by feet—have become inextricably intertwined. In addition to these double influences, the old alliterative forms of poetry demand attention. The ear in English versification is still reminiscent of lines which were governed by consonants repeated in emphatic places of the metre. Blank verse of highly elaborated structure combines three factors (native rhythm, classical scansion, and alliterative appeal to the sense

of recurrent consonantal sounds) in proportions varying with the poet's aim or instinct. It is impossible to analyse the versification of Milton's "Paradise Lost" wholly by the laws of Greek and Latin prosody. It is equally impossible to explain it, as Dr. Guest in his learned treatise on English Rhythms would have us do, by reference only to the sections and the pauses of Anglo-Saxon measures. The peculiar charm of Miltonic blank verse is due to the admixture of both systems in a hybrid peculiar to England after the introduction of humanistic studies. Again, it is impossible to overlook the deliberate alliteration of such lines as the following:

> Far off from these a slow and silent stream,
> Lethe, the river of oblivion, rolls
> Her watery labyrinth, whereof who drinks
> Forthwith his former state and being forgets,
> Forgets both joy and grief, pleasure and pain.

The flexibility of English renders our versification not unlike that of the Greeks. It is true that the uncertainty of our syllabic utterance, and the insensibility of our ear to quantitative values, preclude us from acclimatising metres (like the hexameter), which depend upon dactyls and spondees. Yet the iambic and trochaic measures of dramatic dialogue in Attic Greek and in English, owing to the way in which both languages blend short and long words, are closely similar. Take this example:

> Ah, dear Juliet,
> Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe
> That unsubstantial death is amorous,
> And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
> Thee here in dark to be his paramour?
> For fear of that, I still will stay with thee:
> And never from this palace of dim night
> Depart again: here, here will I remain
> With worms that are thy chamber-maids: O, here
> Will I set up my everlasting rest,
> And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
> From this world-wearied flesh.

Some of the loveliest effects in English poetry are obtained by the artful use of monosyllables:

> Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all!
> What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?
> No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call:
> All mine was thine before thou hadst this more.

Some of its most striking rhetorical effects depend upon a single polysyllabic word set at the right point in a rush of monosyllables:

> Can man by no means creep out of himself,
> And leave the slough of viperous grief behind?

An English poet is compelled to get value out of the short words in which our language abounds. According to his use of them, the line may run like:

> Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts,

or may linger like:

> Showers, hails, snows, frosts, and two-edged winds that prime;

for short words in English, according to their weight and volume, either wing the verse with feathers, or encumber it with chains of lead.

The hybrid nature of English prosody renders emphasis a main feature of our versification. Accentual rhythm formed the original and native groundwork of English prosody. This soon began to be modified by scansion. Learned poets, familiar with the quantitative systems of antiquity, allowed their ear to be governed in the act of composition by memories of Greek or Latin metres. Yet exactitude in the quantitative structure even of iambics has not been insisted on, and consequently the most remarkable effects may be produced in English by violations of classical rules which would have made an Attic audience shudder. No other literature more often illustrates than ours the metrical and rhetorical importance of a word placed so as to surprise the hearer's sense or

to arrest his attention by some bold irregularity. Notice the value of the verb *streams* in this line of Marlowe:

> See where Christ's blood streams in the firmament.

English prose is also hybrid; but in some respects the amalgam has not been made so successfully as in the case of poetry. Starting with the simplicity of Anglo-Saxon and early English style, where the leading characteristics of our syntax are already defined, prose underwent a thorough French remodelling during the reigns of the Norman and Angevine monarchs. The result of this first period of fusion is visible in the style of Sir Thomas Malory's "Morte d'Arthur"; it may be illustrated by the passage in which King Arthur departs for his last journey across the waters of the west:

> "Now put me into the barge," said the king; and so he did softly; and there received him three queens with great mourning, and so those three queens set them down, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head. And then that queen said, "Ah! dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas! this wound on your head hath taken overmuch cold." And so then they rowed from the land, and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him; then Sir Bedivere cried, "Ah! my lord Arthur, what shall become of me now ye go from me, and leave me here alone among mine enemies?" "Comfort thyself," said King Arthur, "and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in; for I will into the vale of Avilion for to heal me of my grievous wound; and if thou never hear more of me, pray for my soul." But evermore the queens and ladies wept and shrieked that it was pity for to hear them. And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost sight of the barge, he wept and wailed; and so he went all the night, and in the morning he was ware between two hills of a chapel and a hermitage.

Translation played a very important part in the moulding of English literature. The "Morte d'Arthur" was avowedly a condensed version of several French romances, executed at a time when French had hardly ceased to be the language of the court and law. During the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the English Bible assumed that shape which is familiar to every one in the old authorised version. It was

the translation of books already well known through the Latin of the Vulgate; and though the translators went at first hand to the original languages of both Old and New Testaments, their choice of rhythm, phrase, and vocable was to a great extent determined by Jerome's example.

> Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?
>
> Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck?
>
> For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest,
>
> With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves;
>
> Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver:
>
> Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light.
>
> There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest.

The mixture of native with French or Latin words—with *present*, *quiet*, *counsellor*, *desolate*, *prince*, *infant*, *cease*—has been accomplished; but the syntax still retains its early English simplicity.

While the Bible was circulating among the people through the medium of the press, England awoke to the new learning, and submitted to the charm of Italian humanism. A third process of fusion now further modified our prose style. Writers, belonging for the most part to the scholarly classes, began to use their mother tongue according to the rules of Latin syntax. They did not merely transplant a multitude of Latin nouns, adjectives, and verbs with slight terminal alteration into the vocabulary. In so far as they did so they were only continuing the process already at work in the style of the Bible. But they also constructed periodic sentences, and built up paragraphs in the manner of the Roman rhetoricians. It would be interesting to trace the development of this humanistic use of language through Bacon, Jonson, Burton, Chillingworth, Sir Thomas Browne, and Jeremy Taylor. These masters of English prose were obeying an instinct somewhat similar to that which moved the poets in

their attempt to assimilate English verse rhythms to classical metres. But the language did not lend itself kindly to the periodic structure they affected. What had been done in Latin by means of terminal forms—declined nouns and adjectives, inflected verbs, genders—those natural artifices of the tongue, which secured lucid and logical arrangement in the most complicated windings of a sentence—had now to be attempted by linking together and interconnecting the short phrases which are proper to the genius of English. Consequently, those labyrinthine edifices seem to be compact of loosely welded parts, not wrought into a vitally organic whole. The incoherence and awkwardness of humanistic prose in England reach their climax in some of Milton's cumbrous periods. Sentence, sub-sentence, parenthesis, qualifying clause, are only kept together by a liberal expenditure of what may be described as verbal hooks and eyes. This passage on Marriage from the "Doctrine of Divorce" illustrates the intricacy of Milton's style, together with its rhetorical sublimity:

Marriage is a covenant the very being whereof consists in unfeigned love and peace; and of matrimonial love, no doubt but that was chiefly meant which by the ancient sages was thus parabled: that Love, if he be not twin-born, yet hath a wondrous brother like him, called Anteros, whom while he seeks all about, his chance is to meet with many false and feigning desires, that wander singly up and down in his likeness. By them, in their borrowed garb, Love, though not wholly blind, as Poets wrong him, yet having but one eye, as being an archer aiming, and that eye not the quickest in this dark region here below, which is not Love's proper sphere, partly out of the simplicity and credulity which is natural to him, often deceived, embraces and consorts him with the obvious and suborned striplings, as if they were his mother's own sons, for so he thinks them. But after a while, as his manner is, when soaring up into the high tower of his Apogæum, above the shadow of the earth, he darts out the rays of his most piercing eyesight, upon the impostures and trim disguises that were used with him, and discerns that this is not his genuine brother, as he imagined: he has no longer the power to hold fellowship with such a personated mate; for straight his arrows lose their golden heads and shed their purple feathers, his silken braids untwine, and slip their knots, and that original and fiery virtue given him by Fate all on a

sudden goes out, and leaves him undeified and despoiled of all his force ; till, finding Anteros at last, he kindles and repairs the almost faded ammunition of his deity, by the reflection of a co-equal and homogeneal fire. Thus mine author sung it to me ; and by the leave of those who would be counted the only grave ones, this is no mere amatorious novel (though to be wise and skilful in these matters, men, heretofore of greatest name in virtue, have esteemed it one of the highest arcs that human contemplation, circling upwards, can make from the globy sea whereon she stands) : but this is a deep and serious verity, showing that love in marriage cannot live nor subsist unless it be mutual.

If we inquire what English prose gained in this humanistic period, we shall find that the range and compass of the language were widely extended, that new and richer rhythms were added to its cadences, and that its capacity for the construction of majestic monumental sentences was proved.

There are sicknesses that walk in darkness ; and there are exterminating angels, that fly wrapt up in the curtains of immateriality and an uncommunicating nature ; whom we cannot see, but we feel their force, and sink under their sword ; and from heaven the veil descends that wraps our heads in the fatal sentence.

It was surely a great gain to have learned to write thus with Jeremy Taylor, or as thus with Thomas Browne :

But man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnising nativities and deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery in the infamy of his nature.

In our English literature, the language of poetry has never differed essentially from the language of prose. Think of Jonson's, Milton's, Dryden's use of both. Think of the simultaneous revival of Elizabethan wealth and colour in the diction of both poetry and prose during the nineteenth century. Yet English has been, upon the whole, most successfully handled for the purposes of verse. That is due, I think, partly to the genius of the idiom and its literary history, partly to the attitude of writers. The simplicity of our grammar, combined with the richness and variety of our vocabulary, renders the language specially fit for poetic utterance, where the phrase is always brief and vibrating ; less fit

for organised and periodic eloquence, to which it was so ruthlessly adapted by the humanistic stylists. The humanists improved versification by their sympathy with classic metre. They went near to ruining prose by their imitation of Latin syntactical forms, and checked the natural evolution of our *oratio soluta* on the lines of early French. Something has always remained of lumbering and slipshod in the structure of long English sentences. Authors, who had no skill in building up periods like Taylor's or Browne's, thought themselves justified by those eminent examples in floundering through jungles of plethoric phrases loosely tacked together by conjunctions.

The incoherence of bad English prose is only less desolating than that of common German prose. I will illustrate my meaning by examples of slipshod, clumsy, or obscure sentences extracted from the published essays of the late Mark Pattison. I choose him because he is upon the whole a vigorous writer, and because he was invariably a severe critic—merciless to those who fell short of an ideal of scholarship which he had formed. It is difficult to believe, however, that the man who wrote as follows, can have thought with the exactitude pertaining to true scholarship.

> In England it was known from Poggio's report in 1418 that no inedited new classics were to be hoped for.[1]

What Pattison has said here is that the English, after Poggio's report in 1418, did not expect the discovery of any fresh and inedited classics. What he meant to say was, that no such classics were to be hoped for in England.

> The conflicting claims of his Muse and a fiery Turk which he had bought at the Frankfort fair had once liked to have proved fatal to him.[2]

This is awkward and of doubtful grammar, as is also the following from the same paragraph:

[1] "Pattison's Essays," vol. i. p. 91.

[2] Ibid., p. 98.

Perhaps we have to thank the road for a good deal more than we often think of the ocean of mediocre Latin verse which the sixteenth century bequeathed to us.

To any one who is at all an artist in language, a sentence so cacophonously crowded with four *thats* as the one which I shall now quote, gives absolute pain :[1]

We are not quite sure that that Father is not giving us Tollius amplified with that latitude of invention which local history at that period allowed itself.

The next specimen contains two of the commonest and vulgarest faults of slipshod English :[2]

Of the period of thirty years, 1563—1594, not more than half was actually spent by Scaliger under his patron's roof. But *it* was always open to him, and his books and papers—his only property—seem to have been deposited in one of *his* Poitevin châteaux.

The *it* and *his* which I have italicised, are the peccant parts of this intolerable sentence. A roof ought never to be open ; and it would have been no advantage to Scaliger should he have been always able to reckon upon finding an open roof in his patron's mansion. After the repeated *him*, *his*, and *his*, the third *his* both logically and grammatically refers to Scaliger. Yet the brain, tortured by reiteration, eventually relegates it to the patron who kept a portion of his roof always open for a scholar guest.

The following sentence might be proposed as a puzzle to school-boys. Examine and analyse its structure. You will find it difficult to determine whether Scaliger or Muretus was the old friend and the guest :[3]

In September, 1562, Muretus came to France, and as an old friend of his father, Julius Cæsar Scaliger, and his guest at Agen, Joseph was as much with him as Muret's only occasional visit to Paris from Charlieu made possible.

Take the next, and explain to which of the plurals in this proposition the italicised word *their* should logically be referred :[4]

[1] "Pattison's Essays," vol. i. p. 110.
[2] Ibid., p. 139.
[3] Ibid., p. 206.
[4] Ibid., p. 235.

Not so many places were ravaged by the Protestants as suffered from the Catholic troops, but as many or more in proportion to *their* numbers.

I have chosen these instances of slovenly writing almost at random from Mr. Pattison's justly famous Quarterly articles on the Stephenses and Scaliger, and from the fragment of his "Life of Joseph Scaliger." They show that in England even a thinker so vigorous, a man of learning so exact, and a critic so scrupulous as the late Rector of Lincoln College, is capable of ignoring the graces of form, and violating the rules of language. Mr. Pattison pours contempt on French *schön-geisterei*, girds at the shallowness of Italian erudition, and utters the astonishing paradox that "disgust at pedantry prevents French writing from ever rising above the level of good drawing-room conversation."[1] Yet when he uses his own mother tongue, he blunders into linguistic errors, which would have brought the ferule of the pedagogue down with force upon the knuckles of Poliziano, and which M. Nisard would have accounted more discreditable than a false quantity. If learning, long study of the Greek and Latin classics, and the aristocratic habit of mind, which lends an almost arrogant hauteur to this exacting scholar, could not preserve him from such ugly vulgarisms, we have the right to demand more of *schön-geisterei* and less of scientific pedantry.

Less attention has hitherto been paid to prose in England than to poetry. Spontaneity and freedom—I had almost written insubordination—are distinctive notes of the English literary spirit. We do not readily submit to the discipline of academies or the dictates of arch-critics. We are intolerant of rules, and jealous lest so-called "correction" should impair the native force of the idiom. What genius and instinct enable us to do, is done vigorously and well. Therefore poetry, being, as Mr. M. Arnold observed, mainly a matter

[1] "Pattison's Essays," vol. i. p. 116.

of genius, has thriven in our island; and without self-laudation we can challenge all literatures, except perhaps the Greek, to match the English in this field. But the rhythms, the cadences, the necessary limitations, the specific graces of prose style, considered as a branch of literary art, have been neglected. Few people who read English prose reflect upon the manner of a writer. They are satisfied if they can grasp his meaning, and require from him no more, being apparently unconscious of the psychological relation between thought and its expression. Much has still to be done by us before the just medium between bald, breathless prepositions and cumbrous, long-winded periods shall be reached. The elasticity, the vivid clarity of phrase, the distinction of each several proposition, which characterise the more felicitously developed organ of written speech in France, have yet to be attained by us. It might almost be asserted that we are at present as far behind the French as the Germans are behind ourselves in the art of average prose.

Part III.

PERSONAL STYLE.

I.

A SURVEY of language, however superficial, makes it evident that when we speak of style, we have to take into account those qualities of national character which are embodied in national speech. If two men could be born of precisely the same physical, mental, and moral nature, at precisely the same moment of history, and under precisely the same social conditions; and if these men learned different languages in the cradle, and used those languages in after life, they would be unable to deliver exactly the same message to the world through literature. The dominant qualities of each mother tongue would impose definite limitations on their power of expressing thoughts, however similar or identical those thoughts might be.

We cannot conceive two men born with the same physical, mental, and moral nature, at the same moment, under precisely the same conditions, and using the same language. They would be identical; and everything they uttered would be clothed with exactly the same words. The absurdity of this conception brings home to us the second aspect of style. Style is not merely a sign of those national qualities which are generic to established languages, and which constitute the so-called genius of a race. It is also the sign of personal qualities, specific to individuals, which constitute the genius of a man. Whatever a man utters from his heart and head is the index of his character. The more remarkable a person

is, the more strongly he is differentiated from the average of human beings, the more salient will be the characteristic notes of his expression. But even the commonest people have, each of them, a specific style. The marks of difference become microscopical as we descend from Dante or Shakespeare to the drudges of the clerk's desk in one of our great cities. Yet these marks exist, and are no less significant of individuality than the variations between leaf and leaf upon the lime trees of an avenue.

It may be asked whether the manner of expression peculiar to any person is a complete index to his character—whether, in other words, there is "an art to find the mind's construction" in the style. Not altogether and exhaustively. Not all the actions and the utterances of an individual betray the secret of his personality. You may live with men and women through years, by day, by night, yet you will never know the whole about them. No human being knows the whole about himself.

The deliberate attitude adopted by a literary writer implies circumspection ; invites suppression, reservation, selection ; is compatible with affectation, dissimulation, hypocrisy. So much cannot be claimed for critical analysis as that we should pretend to reproduce a man's soul after close examination of his work. What we may assert with confidence is that the qualities of style are intimately connected with the qualities and limitations of the writer, and teach us much about him. He wrote thus and thus, because he was this or this. In the exercise of style it is impossible for any one to transcend his inborn and acquired faculties of ideation, imagination, sense-perception, verbal expression—just as it is impossible in the exercise of strength for an athlete to transcend the limits of his physical structure, powers of innervation, dexterity, and courage.[1] The work of art produced by a writer is therefore,

[1] See Émile Hennequin, "La Critique Scientifique," pp. 64—67, for a full and luminous exposition of these points.

of necessity, complexioned and determined by the inborn and acquired faculties of the individual. This is what we mean by the hackneyed epigram : " Le style c'est l'homme."

II.

Certain broad distinctions of moral and emotional temperament may undoubtedly be detected in literary style. A tendency toward exaggeration, toward self-revelation, toward emphasis upon the one side ; a tendency to reserve, to diminished tone in colouring, to parsimony of rhetorical resource upon the other ; these indicate expansiveness or reticence in the writer. Victor Hugo differs by the breadth of the whole heavens from Leopardi. One man is ironical by nature, another sentimental. Sterne and Heine have a common gift of humour ; but the quality of humour in each case is conditioned by sympathetic or by caustic undercurrents of emotion. Sincerity and affectation, gaiety and melancholy, piety and scepticism, austerity and sensuality penetrate style so subtly and unmistakably that a candid person cannot pose as the mere slave of convention, a boon companion cannot pass muster for an anchorite, the founder of a religious sect cannot play the part of an agnostic. In dramatic work the artist creates characters alien from his own personality, and exhibits people widely different from himself acting and talking as they ought to do. This he achieves by sympathy and intuition. Yet all except the very greatest fail to render adequately what they have not felt and been. In playwrights of the second order, like our Fletcher, or of the third order, like our Byron, the individual who writes the tragedy and shapes the characters is always apparent under every mask he chooses to assume. And even the style of the greatest, their manner of presenting the varieties of human nature, betrays individual peculiarities. Æschylus sees men and women differently from Sophocles, Corneille from Racine, Shakespeare from Goethe.

In like manner the broad distinctions of mental temperament may be traced in style. The abstract thinker differs from the concrete thinker in his choice of terms; the analytical from the synthetic; the ratiocinative from the intuitive; the logical from the imaginative; the scientific from the poetical. One man thinks in images, another in formal propositions. One is diffuse, and gets his thought out by reiterated statement. Another makes epigrams, and finds some difficulty in expanding their sense or throwing light upon them by illustrations. One arrives at conclusions by the way of argument. Another clothes assertion with the tropes and metaphors of rhetoric.

The same is true of physical and æsthetical qualities. They are felt inevitably in style. The sedentary student does not use the same figures of speech as come naturally to the muscular and active lover of field sports. According as the sense for colour, or for sound, or for light, or for form shall preponderate in a writer's constitution, his language will abound in references to the world, viewed under conditions of colour, sound, light, or form. He will insensibly dwell upon those aspects of things which stimulate his sensibility and haunt his memory. Thus, too, predilections for sea or mountains, for city-life or rural occupations, for flowers, precious stones, scents, birds, animals, insects, different kinds of food, torrid or temperate climates, leave their mark on literary style.

Acquired faculties and habits find their expression in style no less than inborn qualities. Education, based upon humanism or scientific studies; contact with powerful personalities at an impressible period of youth; enthusiasm aroused for this or that great masterpiece of literature; social environment; high or low birth; professional training for the bar, the church, medicine, or commerce; life in the army, at sea, upon a farm, and so forth, tinge the mind and give a more or less perceptible colour to language.

The use of words itself yields, upon analysis, valuable results illustrative of the various temperaments of authors. A man's vocabulary marks him out as of this sort or that sort—his preference for certain syntactical forms, for short sentences or for periods, for direct or inverted propositions, for plain or figurative statement, for brief or amplified illustrations. Some compose sentences, but do not build paragraphs—like Emerson; some write chapters, but cannot construct a book. Nor is punctuation to be disregarded, inasmuch as stops enable us to measure a writer's sense of time-values, and the importance he attaches to several degrees of rest and pause.

III.

It is impossible to do more than indicate some of the leading points which illustrate the meaning of the saying that style is the man; any one can test them and apply them for himself. We not only feel that Walter Scott *did not* write like Thackeray, but we also know that he *could not* write like Thackeray, and *vice versâ*. This impossibility of one man producing work in exactly the same manner as another makes all deliberate attempts at imitation assume the form of parody or caricature. The sacrifice of individuality involved in scrupulous addiction to one great master of Latin prose, Cicero, condemned the best stylists of the Renaissance—men like Muretus—to lifeless and eventually worthless production. Meanwhile the exact psychology is wanting which would render our intuitions regarding the indissoluble link between style and personal character irrefutable.[1]

Literary style is more a matter of sentiment, emotion, involuntary habits of feeling and observing, constitutional sympathy with the world and men, tendencies of curiosity

[1] While I was engaged in writing this essay, a young French author, now, alas! dead, sent me a book which may be considered as an important contribution to the psychology of style. It is entitled, "La Critique Scientifique," par Émile Hennequin. Paris: Perrin et Cie., 1888.

and liking, than of the pure intellect. The style of scientific works, affording little scope for the exercise of these psychological elements, throws less light upon their authors' temperament than does the style of poems, novels, essays, books of travel, descriptive criticism. In the former case all that need be aimed at is lucid exposition of fact and vigorous reasoning. In the latter, the fact to be stated, the truth to be arrived at, being of a more complex nature, involves a process akin to that of the figurative arts. The stylist has here to produce the desired effect by suggestions of infinite subtlety, and to present impressions made upon his sensibility.

Autobiographies, epistolary correspondence, notes of table-talk, are of the highest value in determining the correlation between a writer's self and his style. We not only derive a mass of information about Goethe's life from Eckermann, but we also discover from those conversations in how true a sense the style of Goethe's works grew out of his temperament and experience. Gibbon and Rousseau, Alfieri and Goldoni, Samuel Johnson in his "Life" by Boswell, John Stuart Mill in his autobiographical essay, Petrarch in his "Secretum" and fragment of personal confessions, have placed similar keys within our reach for unlocking the secret of their several manners.

The rare cases in which men of genius have excelled in more than one branch of art are no less instructive. Michel Angelo the sonnet-writer helps us to understand Michel Angelo the sculptor. Rossetti the painter throws light on Rossetti the poet; William Blake the lyrist upon William Blake the draughtsman. We find, on comparing the double series of work offered by such eminent and exceptionally gifted individuals, that their styles in literature and plastic art possess common qualities, which mark the men and issue from their personalities. Michel Angelo in the sonnets is as abstract, as ideal, as form-loving, as indifferent to the charm of brilliant colour, as neglectful of external nature as Michel

Angelo in his statues and the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. Rossetti's pictures, with their wealth of colour, their elaborate execution, their sharp incisive vision, their deep imaginative mysticism and powerful perfume of intellectual sensuousness, present a close analogue to his ballads, sonnets, and descriptive poems. With these and similar instances in our mind, we are prepared to hear that Victor Hugo designed pictures in the style of Gustave Doré; nor would it surprise us to discover that Gustave Doré had left odes or fiction in the manner of Victor Hugo.

The problems suggested by style as a sign and index of personality may be approached from many points of view. I have not aimed at exhaustiveness even of suggestion in my treatment of the topic; and while saying much which will appear perhaps trivial and obvious, have omitted some of the subtler and more interesting aspects of the matter. A systematic criticism of personal style would require a volume, and would demand physiological and psychological knowledge which is rarely found in combination with an extensive study of literatures and arts.

Part IV.

THE ART OF STYLE.

I.

"THE choice and command of language," said Gibbon, "is the fruit of exercise." Every writer has it in his power to improve his faculty of expression, as every athlete can improve his muscular development by practice.

The final end of all style is precision, veracity of utterance, truth to the thing to be presented. The thing itself will differ in simplicity and complexity, in scientific aridity and in emotional richness, in imaginative grandeur and in passionate intensity. Style, regarded from the point of view of art, adapts itself to these differences in the subject-matter. Whether consciously or unconsciously, is not at present the question. It suffices to say that style (if worthy of the name) finds the pure phrase the fitting mode of utterance. It rejects superfluities, admits ornament where ornament is part and parcel of the thing to be presented, seeks beauty in truth, selects, discards, mindful always that there is one and only one absolutely right way of saying anything.

This is as true of poetry as of prose. Phrases like:

> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
> And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh and strong:

or like:

> Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is;
> What if my leaves are falling like its own!

have to be regarded as simple propositions, no less simple than these which follow:

> So ended this great siege, the most memorable in the annals of the British Isles. It had lasted a hundred and five days. The garrison had been reduced from about seven thousand effective men to about three thousand.

All these propositions are right, are veracious, are good in style, in so far as they are adequate to the speaker's thought and perception of fact—in the first two cases to the highly charged and complex matter which Wordsworth and Shelley sought to deliver, in the third to the definite issue which Macaulay had to report. Criticism might question whether the siege of Londonderry was really "the most memorable in the annals of the British Isles." But criticism, knowing Macaulay's view of English history, would have no right to challenge his statement on the ground of style. Criticism might object to Wordsworth's identification of Duty with Cosmic Law, and to Shelley's pathetic sympathy with autumn woodlands. But criticism, having seized each poet's point of view, would have no right to challenge his statement on the ground of style. In each case the verbal expression is correspondent to the thing presented.

Precision being the main purpose of a writer, he will pay minute attention to the grammar and logic of language, so that there may be no obscurity, or incoherence in his method of expression. With the same object he will study the qualities of words, remembering that the right word used in the right place constitutes the perfection of style. Words will be weighed in their sonority, their colour-value, their suggestiveness, their derivation and metaphysical usage. He will show his taste by the avoidance of foreign vocables, neologisms, obsolete terms, unless the rhetoric of his subject-matter renders such *verba insolentia* helpful to the meaning. To be meticulous (as Sir Thomas Browne would say), in the adoption of new phrases or the resuscitation of old words

is hardly less reprehensible than to be reckless in the ill-considered use of them. Justice of perception consists in knowing how and when and where to deviate from the beaten track; and in nothing do writers of equal excellence reveal their individual proclivities more plainly than in their selection of uncommon vocables or turns of phrase.

The art of style, like all arts of expression, does not aim exclusively at precision. It is a fine art, and demands beauty as the concomitant of truth. We have a sense for the beauty of language in itself, just as we have a sense for the beauty of sounds, colours, forms. This sense claims to be gratified by harmonious and rhythmic utterance. Students of style will therefore take pains to avoid unnecessary tautology, to vary the openings and outlines of propositions, to alternate long and short sentences, and to connect these into well-built paragraphs. They will be sensible that, as every idea has its one right verbal form, so every phrase ought to have its own distinctive cadence. Goethe used to say that each poetic motive brought with it a rhythm and a stanza proper to itself; and this remark might be extended to the minutest particles of thought conveyed in language.

Only slovenly writers who never felt the beauty of verbal form, and brutal writers who do wilful violence to language, ignore the duty of seeking the right phrase. Those for whom style is an art will differ immeasurably in their power to use it. The unknown painter struggling with a task beyond his faculty cannot charm our senses with the suave and luminous achievements of a Titian or Veronese. But even humble workers are able to do much by love and care, toward lifting their utterance above the dead level of commonplace. Let them rewrite sentences, recast paragraphs, remould chapters, seeking at every step a bettering of their best, a closer union with the melody which penetrates the intellectual ear. Striving thus, we become sensible of what is meant by art in style. We grow more vigorous; and when there comes some vital

thought to utter, the clothing words spring forth with more of freshness, strength, and music.

The lucid exposition of ideas in ordered sequence, the weaving of sentences into coherent paragraphs, the unfolding of arguments by natural yet logically constructed steps, the presentation of scenes and pictures by successions of contributory images—these operations of the literary craftsman demand close attention to what is called transition. Style, it has been said, consists in the art of transition: that is, the art of moving easily and convincingly from point to point, supplying the needful "connective tissue" of language without clumsiness and without the obtrusive pedantry of scholastic distinctions. Nor let it be imagined that this is a mere matter of stylistic grace. The art of transition and connection has quite as much to do with veracity of thought as with elegance of expression. It was upon this art, as the one thing needful to sound rhetoric, that Socrates discoursed in his golden way to Phædrus on the banks of the Ilissus. This is what Buffon meant by the words which so impressed Gustave Flaubert: "Toutes les beautés intellectuelles qui se trouvent dans un beau style, tous les rapports dont il est composé, sont autant de vérités aussi utiles, et peut-être plus précieuses pour l'esprit public, que celles qui peuvent faire le fond du sujet."

II.

While bestowing minute attention on the niceties of language, young writers should bear in mind that no rules of composition, no rhetoric which professes to teach the art of treating subjects appropriately, can supply the two requisites of a good style—vigorous and well-digested thought, which constitutes its matter; and pure idiomatic diction, which constitutes its crowning grace of form.

"Authors," said De Quincey, in his unfinished essay on Style, "have always been a dangerous class for any language." They have been dangerous because they are liable to sub-

stitute sophistry and declamation for solid thinking, and because the habit of writing books alienates their language from the vivacity of the vernacular and the raciness of spoken idiom.

Few men of letters nowadays would dare to follow Swift and Sterne, those classics of our prose, in their bold use of colloquialisms. Goethe prided himself on "having never thought much about thinking." We might argue in favour of not thinking overmuch about writing. A fastidious avoidance of what is plain and common may lead us insensibly into the worst of all faults—affectation and stylistic pedantry; may blind us to the fact that what we say is more important than how we say it, and that the first condition of good writing is strong feeling and clear thinking.

Englishmen, however, incline toward carelessness rather than scrupulousness in the matter of language. It will be long before our journalists and novelists deserve the reproach which George Sand is said to have addressed to Flaubert, and which, in my opinion, Flaubert, that martyr to verbal nicety, deserved: "You regard expression as an end in itself; it is but an effect."

The purity of idiom in English literature runs its chief risks from bookish phrases, from misapplied terms like "predicament" and "category," from nouns in "ist" and "ism" ("scientist," "educationalist," "evolutionism"), from evil metaphors involved in verbs like "to avail oneself of," from hackneyed forms of artificial sentences, which save the writer trouble and blind him to the duty of saying freshly what he thinks and feels. From the great curse of German, the wholesale incorporation of foreign words into the language, we are fortunately delivered by the genius of our mother speech. We cannot construct endless ugly verbs in *iren*, or adopt French vocables with mutilated terminations. Nor again is it within the power of English writers to construct flaccid sentences of between two hundred and three hundred words,

in which the attention of the reader is suspended till the close falls on the separable particle of the leading verb. That is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, which can be found only in Germany.

De Quincey, in the essay already quoted from, inveighs against "the tumid and tumultuary structure of our sentences." He delivers his impeachment in the following period, which, except that it is artfully conducted to a climax, might seem designed to illustrate the fault he is attacking:

> Ever since a more bookish air was impressed upon composition without much effort by the Latinised and artificial phraseology, by forms of expression consecrated to books, and by long-tailed words in *osity* and *ation*, either because writers felt that already, in this one act of preference shown to the artificial vocabulary, they had done enough to establish a differential character of regular composition, and on that consideration thought themselves entitled to neglect the combination of their words into sentences or periods; or because there is a real natural sympathy between the Latin phraseology and a Latin structure of sentence; certain it is and remarkable, that our popular style in the common limited sense of arrangement applied to words or the syntax of sentences, has laboured with two faults that might have been thought incompatible; it has been artificial, by artifices peculiarly adapted to the powers of the Latin language, and yet at the very same time careless and disordinate.

Every artist in style ought to be able to construct a period like this. But he should be cautious in the exercise of his power, reserving it for solemn and exceptional occasions. De Quincey wrote before the days of Macaulay, the *Saturday Review*, and Mr. Matthew Arnold. Whatever may be urged against our average prose style now, it can no longer be called "tumid and tumultuary." From neither a good nor a bad author of the present time would it be easy to extract a sentence with as many inversions, parentheses, suspensions, as many resounding Latin words, and an apodosis so long suspended, as mark the example I have just quoted. Short propositions and easy writing have become fashionable. Simplicity of structure is even ostentatiously paraded.

III.

Among means toward the acquisition of pure style, the most important is "industrious and select reading."

When Ben Jonson, in the *Poetaster*, administered his purge to Marston, he bade that crabbed writer break his fast upon "old Cato's principles," then "taste a piece of Terence, suck his phrase instead of liquorice." Plautus and Ennius among the Romans were to be shunned as meat too crude for queasy stomachs. So was Lycophron among the Greeks. But Callimachus, Theocritus, and "high Homer" might be read with profit. In the sixteenth century these were needful precepts. There were then few models of written style except the ancients and some masterpieces of Italian. But even in that limited field criticism exercised its judgment, pointing out which authors were to be preferred because of their lucidity.

The case is altered now. We have a rich and varied modern literature to choose from. The first duty of a student should be to make himself acquainted with the classics of his own nation. This forms a copious vocabulary, and fills the ear with native rhythms both in prose and verse. Each language, however, has its specific strength and beauty. Therefore it is desirable to study Greek and Latin for clear-cut form in style, Italian for melodious flow, French for limpidity and finish. By observing what is excellent in each of these literatures, and in what points they differ from our own, by translating passages from their great writers into English, and considering how the genius of our tongue may assimilate their graces, the novice gradually forms a style.

Although a man's style is the sign of his faculties, yet he possesses the power of moulding it upon that of the writers he prefers—as George Sand moulded hers on Rousseau, Mr. Ruskin his on the Bible and Hooker, Mr. R. L. Stevenson his on the multitude of authors whom it was

his habit, while a youth, assiduously to imitate. Nothing is more disastrous than to take as model some illustrious artist whose tricks are more easily assimilated than his excellences. Lyly, through the vogue of Euphuism, injured English prose in the seventeenth century, and Marino ruined the poetry of the Italians. Johnson was noxious at the end of the last century. Carlyle debased the standard of narrative and critical diction in the second half of the nineteenth century. Macaulay, in spite of his sterling merit, is accountable for much that is flashy and short-winded in contemporary style.

The control exercised by famous authors over the forms of national literature through successive centuries is one of the most curious aspects of the present inquiry. We have only to think of the influence of Cicero and Virgil over Latin prose and poetry; of Boccaccio and Petrarch over Italian. Men are in all ways more imitative than we usually allow. This might be further illustrated by the predominance of fashion at certain epochs. It became the custom among us in England, about the middle of the seventeenth century, to write with eyes fixed steadily on France as the exponent of the classical tradition. During the last hundred years we have been writing in conscious and admiring sympathy with our Elizabethan ancestors. After allowance has been made for divergence from the models fashionable at each of these epochs—divergences due in the one case to national genius, and in the other to historical and social changes within the English people—the specific notes of the two periods in our literature may be roughly explained by reference respectively to dominance of French and Elizabethan fashion.[1]

IV.

Style, as we have seen, is a twofold phenomenon, involving both the genius of nations exemplified in language, and

[1] I hope to pursue this subject further in an essay on "Elizabethan and Victorian Poetry."

the genius of individuals who use the language. Thus considered, the art of style consists, for each person, in the method of employing his faculties of thought and feeling, and his command of any given language, to the best advantage.

But style also varies with the nature of the subject-matter, the state of the writer's mind at any given moment, and the end to be attained by utterance. The style of poetry differs essentially from that of prose; and neglect of this fact leads to hybrid composition, which offends the purest taste. Poetical prose and word-painting are common with those writers who have not made up their minds in what direction their powers lie—who would fain be poets, and yet choose the seemingly more facile vehicle of prose to utter their emotions.

"That is good rhetoric for the hustings which is bad for a book," said De Quincey. "In the senate, and for the same reason in a newspaper, it is good to reiterate your meaning." The orator has to repeat his arguments, and to place the same points in new lights, lest their force should escape the fugitive attention of an audience. It would be impertinent in the writer of a book to claim the privileges of a public speaker. His readers are able to perpend his sentences, to pause and ponder, to resume the chain of reasoning by casting their eyes backward over the pages they have traversed. Yet, even in books, some subjects demand a more oratorical method of treatment than others. When it is the writer's aim to persuade his readers, to carry them gently along with him, to infiltrate their minds with unfamiliar or difficult ideas, he may indulge in repetition. This made the style of J. S. Mill effective. But it also rendered that style deceptive by its very lucidity, hiding the thinness of some thoughts which were presented under aspects so agreeably varied.

That is good rhetoric for the pulpit which is bad for the

bar; and conversely a forensic style is intolerable within the precincts of a church. Lord Brougham was right to study Demosthenes; but Bossuet, and South, and Newman are proper models for a canon of S. Paul's. The reason is apparent. On the hustings, in the senate, before juries, in the pulpit, men appeal to different passions and emotions: they are not only dealing with different orders of ideas, but are attempting to impress different sensibilities, and to influence the reason by different kinds of argument. The mood of the speaker differs in each case; he feels a different stimulus and draws his inspiration from different sources. The same man is frequently a first-rate preacher and a powerful platform orator; he may also be an excellent parliamentary speaker. But the change of attitude implied in each of these positions necessitates an alteration in his style. The personality of Mr. Gladstone, the character of the individual moulding his manner of expression, appears alike in that great rhetorician's books, letters, lay-sermons, speeches to the House, and addresses to Midlothian monster meetings. They display common qualities of eloquence and casuistical subtlety, combined with imperfect powers of criticism; but these are variously, if slightly, modified according to the matter and the mode of presentation.

Within the stricter limits of writing the same rhetorical principles hold good. If a man of science sits down to pen a treatise which will be read by experts in the libraries, and discussed in the learned societies of Europe, he confines himself to exact statement and the lucid order of marshalled arguments. If he desires to popularise the same ideas, he abounds in illustrations and elucidations, introducing matter which would have been irrelevant in the handling of his theme for scientific students.

History, fiction, biography, albeit they are three species of prose narrative, demand different styles. It is indeed possible to lend the glamour of romance to history, as Michelet did in

his "Histoire de France," or to treat it from the biographical point of view, as Carlyle did in his "Frederick." Yet history cannot be mistaken for deliberate fiction or for pure biography. Fiction, in like manner, may be composed upon the lines of history or biography; but in so far as it assumes the gravity of the one or the veracity of the other, it fails to communicate the impressions we expect from romance. This is proved sufficiently by current language. We say that the sixth and seventh books of Thucydides are as engrossing as any novel, that the last three books of Herodotus have the movement of a drama, that the incidents of Cellini's autobiography surpass the boldest inventions of an imaginative writer. That means that we look for certain qualities in fiction, of which we are now and then reminded in the lives of men or the episodes of national story. Biography, again, can be written from the point of view of fiction—that was common enough in past ages; or from the point of view of history—that is a favourite practice nowadays. But whether we regard Plutarch's "Lives" and Machiavelli's "Castruccio Castracane," which represent the one method, or the many "Lives and Times" of eminent persons which are fashionable at the present date, it is obvious in each case that the writers were aiming at what should pass for full-length portraits of individuals. Biography differs from fiction, since it appeals to the sense of veracity, and does not seek to create illusion; from history, since it discards details which will not throw the central figure into high relief.

Within the sphere of dramatic poetry, it is clear that tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, owing to their different tone and subject-matter, require different arts of rhetoric. You cannot write an idyll in the same manner as a satire, or pronounce the panegyric of a deceased emperor in the style appropriate to a discourse on bees. The choice of vehicle in each of these cases may be the same. Prose may be used for every species of the drama. Idylls, satires, panegyrics, didactic poems, may be composed in the same metre—hexameters, or heroic

couplets, or blank verse. Yet the matter to be handled and the mental attitude of the writer while handling it, necessitate unmistakable differences of literary mood and form.

These are truisms with which every student is familiar. The excuse for repeating them is twofold. In the first place we have to insist upon the indissoluble nexus between thought and language, whereby a change in the writer's mental attitude, a change in his mental material, induces a corresponding quality of differentiated style. In the second place they enable us to point out a further sense in which style may be regarded as an art to be acquired by practice—through the study of acknowledged masterpieces in each of the branches of literature.

A man's own style will to a large extent be made or marred by the masters under whose influence he falls, or by the impress of a prevalent ideal. If this were not so, we should be unable to trace the tradition of Virgilian style in Latin literature, or to define the predominance of Boccaccio in the literature of the Italian Renaissance. We could not discuss the characteristics of a given epoch or the manner of a well-marked school: by which terms we are wont to indicate the co-operative action of gregarious writers and their liability to imitation. A deeper meaning might be given to these aspects of transmitted style. But this is not the place to entertain speculative questions which have been already discussed in a former essay.[1]

For the present, it is enough to point out that a writer, having developed his command of language, improved his taste by reading, and discovered the compass of his organ of expression, seeks further instruction when he wishes to apply his power of style to any special form of prose or poetry. If he is ambitious to compose an epic, he will inquire how Homer, Virgil, Dante, Tasso, Milton, set about their task; or

[1] See above, Essay No. 2, on the Application of Evolutionary Principles to Art and Literature.

the taste of his age may direct him to the Scandinavian Sagas, the Nibelungen, the Song of Roland, and the "Morte d'Arthur." If he is an orator, he will consult Demosthenes, Cicero, Burke, Bossuet. If his bent be toward tragedy, he will meditate the Attic and Elizabethan dramatists, the French classics, Goethe and Schiller. If he attempts satire, he will see what Archilochus and Aristophanes, Juvenal and Persius, Rabelais and Regnier, Cervantes and Swift, Dryden and Pope, Heine and Victor Hugo, have done before him. If history attract his genius, Herodotus and Thucydides, Livy and Tacitus, Machiavelli and Michelet, Gibbon and Macaulay, Von Ranke and Mommsen, claim his attention. And so forth through the whole long list of literary species.

We cannot, in the present conditions of culture, affirm that any monuments of art are absolutely authoritative. The choice is large. The canons of criticism are liberal. The instincts of the individual, whether at variance with the general tendency of his age, or submissive to its influence, will determine his selection of a model. Still, it is certain that some model, whether deliberately chosen or passively assimilated, exercises a control over the writer's manner. If the art of style could be reduced to a fixed science, then certain masterpieces in each branch of literature would have to be recognised as indisputable standards, and production would cease or merge in imitation. But the intellectual bias of the century forbids such a relapse into the pedantry of classicism. Taste, therefore, and the rules of comparative study under which we work now, force the artist to reflect upon the various creations of numerous predecessors in any field which he has undertaken. And thus the great monuments of past ages are continually moulding and impressing the style of the present, crossing and recrossing, blending their influences. Ever more and more, the literature of the Occidental races tends to become a complicated mass of hybrids.

DEMOCRATIC ART.

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WALT WHITMAN.

I.

DURING the first half of this century, the rival merits of classical and romantic art were stormily debated. There is no need to revive that discussion. People of sense now recognise the truth that in whatever style an artist works, the style will be classical, provided the work itself be good, sincere, and representative of sterling thought. Yet a few words have to be said about this bygone phase of European criticism, since it forms a necessary prelude to the treatment of Democratic Art.

The romantic revolt against those canons of taste which prevailed in Europe after the Revival of Learning, was in some respects analogous to the insurgence of realism against idealism. It took its origin in a desire for free and spontaneous artistic form. It started from the conviction that there was something radically insincere in the orthodox rules regarding dignity of sentiment, sustained diction, and heroic action. The study of mediæval antiquities, the revived enthusiasm for Shakespeare, and the powerful impact of the German mind aroused from its long lethargy, provoked a reaction against humanistic traditions, which acquired revolutionary force in France. Romantic poets, novelists, and painters declared their abhorrence of the conventional "grand style." They sought inspiration from hitherto neglected masterpieces of the Middle Ages. They delighted in the

crudest aspects of human life and nature. To be striking, vivid, passionate, and grotesque was their main object. Proportion and harmony gave place to wayward incoherence. The gutter, the hospital, the galleys were ransacked for examples of pathos and nobility. Witches and vampires superseded the Pantheon of Olympus. Murder, rape, suicide, disgust of life in love-lorn youths and maidens, formed the motive principles of wild unhealthy fiction. It was a time of spasms and contortions, of *Sturm und Drang* and *Weltschmerz;* of Goethe's *Werther*, De Musset's *Rolla*, Byron's *Manfred*, Heine's *Ratcliffe*, Schiller's *Robbers*. Sense and stateliness, the precepts of Boileau, Voltaire's pellucid irony, Pope's correction, Lessing's moderation, were assailed with ridicule and sarcasm. The great but essentially imperfect work of men like Victor Hugo, Delacroix, Gautier, testified to the vitality of this reactionary movement. It found a prose Shakespeare in Balzac, and produced a monumental masterpiece in Goethe's *Faust*.

Meanwhile a thorough-going emancipation of taste and judgment had been effected. The freedom for which the earlier romanticists had fought was gained. New forms of expression and new standards of artistic excellence prevailed. Pseudo-classical insincerity and hollowness were purged away; and it became apparent that romanticism, in its turn, was not devoid of pedantry. The main result of this romantic revolution was the discovery that no subject in human history or life, no object in the eternal world of nature, is unpoetical or unfitted for artistic treatment. At the same time, all methods of handling, all ways of seizing and presenting the material of art, obtained an equal right to exist. At the end of the conflict, criticism only demanded that style should realise the end proposed by the artist, that workmanship should be honest, the craftsman conscientious, and the product faithful to the concept.

This in itself was a great gain. Yet if this had been all,

the prospect for the future would not have been cheering. As their names imply, both classicism and romanticism were derivative and not spontaneous ways of conceiving the art problem. The classical schools of modern times rehandled material and observed rules supplied from Greece and Rome through scholarship. The romantic schools reverted to the literature and the architecture of feudalism. Classicism was essentially aristocratic. Romanticism was revolutionary; but it drew its inspiration from sources no less aristocratic. Neither mode possessed finality, because neither corresponded to the cardinal phenomenon of the nineteenth century, which is the advent of the people. The point to which we have been brought by their conflict in the sphere of art and letters is that a new mode of utterance, which may be termed the Democratic, has been rendered possible. The shams of the classicists, the spasms of the romanticists, have alike to be abandoned. Neither on a mock Parnassus nor on a pasteboard Blocksberg can the poets of the age now worship. The artist walks the world at large beneath the light of natural day. Despising nothing which the past can teach, rejecting nothing which the present offers, he aims at manifesting what he finds of beautiful and striking in the outer and the inner worlds: secure the while that if he feels sincerely and labours conscientiously, his work will be of sterling value, no matter what the style may be or what kind of subject has attracted him.

II.

This, speaking broadly, is the initial condition of Democratic Art: an art free in its choice of style, free in its choice of subject; an art which has recovered sobriety after the delirium of romantic revolution; but which retains from that reactionary movement one precious principle—that nothing in nature or in man is unpoetical, if treated by a mind which feels its poetry and can interpret it.

This, however, is only the beginning, the attitude, the opportunity of Democratic Art. There remains a graver question to be considered. How shall the poet and the artist adjust themselves to what I have called the cardinal fact of our epoch, to the advent of the people? Classical and feudal art were essentially aristocratic. Modern classicism and romanticism were in a derivative sense aristocratic also. The latter, it is true, brought certain aspects of the people into prominence. But it did so hysterically, in a spirit of revolt, without clear intelligence of the altered political and social conditions to which serious art must henceforth respond.

Under these conditions an art for the people, of the people, seems imperatively demanded, unless art, including literature, shall relax its hold upon reality and subside into agreeable trifling.

Up to the present moment there are but few signs of any vital resurrection of the spirit. Not only in Europe, but in America also, culture continues to be mainly reproductive and imitative. The conflict of romanticism with classicism liberated taste; yet artists still handle worn-out themes in the old formal ways, without the earlier grasp upon them, without fervour of conviction, and without power to awake popular enthusiasm.

III.

So far as I am aware, only one living author has approached this problem with a full sense of its present urgency and ultimate preponderance. I allude to Walt Whitman, whose whole life has been employed in attempting to lay foundations for a new national literature. Whatever we may think about Whitman's actual performance, it is impossible to neglect his teaching or his practice, when we entertain the question of Democratic Art. For this reason I propose to examine what he has written directly and indirectly upon the topic.

A short but pregnant essay, entitled "Democratic Vistas,"

contains the pith of Whitman's theoretical opinions. It starts with a declaration of the author's intention to use "the words America and Democracy" as "convertible terms." "The United States," he says, "are destined to surmount the gorgeous history of Feudalism, or else prove the most tremendous failure of time." Whitman points out that while America advances rapidly to a dominant position in wealth and strength and all material qualities of national greatness, a literature corresponding to that modern Democracy with which she is identified, has not as yet appeared. "Feudalism, caste, the ecclesiastic traditions, though palpably retreating from political institutions, still hold essentially by their spirit, even in this country, entire possession of the most important fields, indeed the very subsoil of education and of social standards and literature." From this proposition he advances to the assertion that "Democracy can never prove itself beyond cavil until it founds and luxuriantly grows its own forms of arts, poems, schools, theology, displacing all that exists or that has been produced anywhere in the past, under opposite influences."

The claims here advanced for the art demanded by America and Democracy are perhaps excessive. Yet Walt Whitman has to be attended to when he writes upon this subject. "He *is* Democracy," said Thoreau, speaking of him. And his opinions, although audacious in the extreme, are those of a powerful thinker as well as a sagacious observer.

In the Old World we shall possibly find them only in part valuable; since they are specially uttered for the instruction of the United States. England, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, cannot be expected to break with their historical traditions, and to discard all "that has been produced anywhere in the past, under opposite conditions." Whatever may be the triumph of Democracy in Europe, this is requiring too much of nations born in the purple, and adorned with so many illustrious monuments of ancestral genius. It may

also be doubted whether Whitman is wise in exhorting the miscellaneous population of North America to found a new culture which shall "displace all that exists."

The mental progress of humanity is not effected by abrupt divisions and sudden dislocations. Every process of change implies absorption, blending, compromise, recombination. As in the case of a glacier, if movement implies fracture, it also involves regelation. The spirit of an age or race yields to that of its successor, but abides within it still as an essential ingredient — assumed, transformed, and carried forward. Modern forces evolve themselves inside the sphere of men and manners, which have been shaped by influences derived from remote antiquity. We are the complex outcome of a tenfold mingled ancestry, not any portion of which has been, or can be, absolutely cast aside. To escape the fatality of hereditary transmission is hopeless. No individual man can be wholly original, in the sense of being independent of his progenitors and predecessors. Far more impossible is it for whole nations to fling themselves adrift from their moorings, or to construct an ideal world of culture corresponding to temporary conditions however urgent and imposing. The advent of the people, paramount as it is in the experience of the nineteenth century, will not revolutionise the laws which govern human society. Language, the instrument of thought and the vehicle of utterance, remains an uncontrollable witness to the dependence of the present on the past. No one has been so insane as to pretend that odes and epics could be written in Volapük.[1]

[1] Whitman himself seems willing to concede the point on which I have insisted in this paragraph. He says, in an article on the "Poetry of the Future" (*North American Review*, February, 1881—why not included in his "November Boughs," I know not): "I see that this world of the West, as part of all, fuses inseparably with the East, and with all, as time does—the ever new, yet old, old human race—'the same subject continued,' as the novels of our grandfathers had it for chapter-heads. If we are not to hospitably receive and complete the inaugurations of the old civilis-

After making these deductions, Whitman's claim for a new start in culture deserves serious consideration. Democracy is a fact, the main fact, I repeat it, of our epoch. It is more than a political phenomenon. It contains the germ of a religious enthusiasm. If the modern world is destined to be remodelled by Democracy—and in some form or other this must happen —then what is applicable to America will in a large measure apply to Europe also. We need not accept the postulate that Democracy must prove itself beyond cavil by creating intellectual types which shall displace all that previously existed. But we may believe that Democracy will and ought to produce arts and a literature differing in essential points from those of classical antiquity and romantic feudalism. We may admit that Græco-Roman and mediæval ideals are inadequate to the modern, democratic, scientific stage upon which humanity has definitely entered. We may even be so sanguine as to hope that this new phase of development contains an ideality of its own, capable of contributing hitherto unapprehended sources of inspiration to the artist.

This is the problem offered to investigation in my present essay. I wish to consider it mainly from the point of view furnished by Whitman's writings.

IV.

There are two aspects under which the problem of Democratic Art must be regarded. In the first place we have to ask what sort of art, including literature under this title, Democracy requires. To this question Whitman, in his

---

ations, and change their small scale to the largest, broadest scale, what on earth are we for?" That is common sense. Here Whitman puts his position with regard to the innovatory and superseding destiny of the United States in a reasonable light. Wishing to do him justice, I have quoted the passage ; although I am not aware that he has republished the article in which it occurs. It may appear in one of the many collections of his works in prose and verse with which I am unacquainted. At any rate, the essay ought to be read by students of Whitman, for it is full of fine things.

"Democratic Vistas," gives an answer: turbid in expression, far from lucid, but pregnant with sympathetic intelligence of the main issues. In the second place we have to ask what elements are furnished to the artist by the people, which have not already been worked out in the classical and feudal forms and their derivatives. Whitman attempts to supply us with an answer to this second question also, not in his speculative essays, but in the mass of imaginative compositions which he designates by the name of poems or notes for poems. His report upon both topics may be postponed for the moment, while we revert to the revolution effected by the romantic movement of a hundred years ago. It behoves us to review the clearance of obsolete obstructions, and to survey the new ground gained, whereon our hopes are founded of a future reconstruction.

Delivered from scholastic traditions regarding style and the right subjects to be handled—delivered from pedantry and blind reactionary fervour—delivered from dependence upon aristocratic and ecclesiastical authority—sharing the emancipation of the intellect by modern science and the enfranchisement of the individual by new political conceptions—the artist is brought immediately face to face with the wonderful world of men and things he has to interpret and to recreate. The whole of nature, seen for the first time with sane eyes, the whole of humanity, liberated for the first time from caste and class distinctions, invite his sympathy. Now dawns upon his mind the beauty, the divinity, which lies enfolded in the simplest folk, the commonest objects presented to his senses. He perceives the dignity of humble occupations, the grace inherent in each kind of labour well performed. He discovers that love is a deity in the cottage no less than in kings' chambers; not with the supercilious condescension of Tasso's "Aminta" or Guarini's "Pastor Fido," but with a reverent recognition of the *præsens deus* in the heart of every man and woman. In order to make Florizel and Perdita charming, it is no longer

necessary that they should be prince and princess in disguise; nor need the tale of "Daphnis and Chloe" now be written with that lame conclusion of lost children restored to wealthy high-born parents. Heroism steps forth from the tent of Achilles; chivalry descends from the arm-gaunt charger of the knight; loyalty is seen to be no mere devotion to a dynasty; passionate friendship quits the brotherhood of Pylades and the dear embraces of Peirithous. None of these high virtues are lost to us. On the contrary, we find them everywhere. They are brought within reach, instead of being relegated to some remote region in the past, or deemed the special property of privileged classes. The engine-driver steering his train at night over perilous viaducts, the life-boat man, the member of a fire-brigade assailing houses toppling to their ruin among flames; these are found to be no less heroic than Theseus grappling the Minotaur in Cretan labyrinths. And so it is with the chivalrous respect for womanhood and weakness, with loyal self-dedication to a principle or cause, with comradeship uniting men in brotherhood, with passion fit for tragedy, with beauty shedding light from heaven on human habitations. They were thought to dwell far off in antique fable or dim mediæval legend. They appeared to our fancy clad in glittering armour, plumed and spurred, surrounded with the aureole of noble birth. We now behold them at our house-doors, in the streets and fields around us. Conversely, our eyes are no longer shut to the sordidness and baseness which royal palaces and princely hearts may harbour—to the meanness of the Court of the Valois, to the vulgarity of the Court of Charles II., to the vile tone of a Prince Regent, to the dishonour, dishonesty, and disloyalty toward women which have always, more or less, prevailed in so-called good society.

This extended recognition of the noble and the lovely qualities in human life, the qualities upon which pure art must seize, is due partially to what we call democracy. But it

implies something more than that word is commonly supposed to denote—a new and more deeply religious way of looking at mankind, a gradual triumph after so many centuries of the spirit which is Christ's, an enlarged faculty for piercing below externals and appearances to the truth and essence of things. God, the divine, is recognised as immanent in nature, and in the soul and body of humanity ; not external to these things, not conceived of as creative from outside, or as incarnated in any single personage, but as all-pervasive, all-constitutive, everywhere and in all. That is the democratic philosophy ; and science has contributed in no small measure to produce it.

Meanwhile, we need not preach the abandonment of high time-honoured themes. Why should we seek to break the links which bind us to the best of that far past from which we came? Achilles has not ceased to be a fit subject for poem or statue, because we discern heroism in an engine-driver. Lovely knights and Flora Macdonald, Peirithous and Pylades, King Cophetua and Burd Helen, abide with all the lustre of their strength, and grace, and charm. They have lost nothing because others have gained—because we now acknowledge that the chivalry, the loyalty, the comradeship, the love, the pathos, which made their stories admirable, are shared by living men and women, whose names have not been sounded through fame's silver trumpet.

I have hitherto touched but lightly upon the extension of the sphere of beauty which may be expected from Democratic Art. Through it we shall be led to discover the infinite varieties of lovely form which belong peculiarly to the people. Caste and high birth have no monopoly of physical comeliness. It may even be maintained that social conditions render it impossible for them to display more than a somewhat limited range of beauty. Goethe, I think, defined good society as that which furnished no material for poetry. We might apply this paradox to plastic art, and say that polished gentlemen and ladies do not furnish the best materials for

sculpture and painting. How hardly shall they who wear evening clothes and ball-dresses enter into the kingdom of art! There is a characteristic beauty in each several kind of diurnal service, which waits to be elucidated. The superb poise of the mower, as he swings his scythe; the muscles of the blacksmith, bent for an unerring stroke upon the anvil; the bowed form of the reaper, with belt tightened round his loins; the thresher's arm uplifted, while he swings the flail; the elasticity of oarsmen rising from their strain against the wave; the jockey's grip across his saddle; the mountaineer's slow, swinging stride; the girl at the spinning-wheel, or carrying the water-bucket on her head, or hanging linen on the line, or busied with her china-closet: in each and every motive of this kind—and the list might be indefinitely prolonged, for all trades and occupations have some distinguishing peculiarity—there appears a specific note of grace inalienable from the work performed. The artists of previous ages did not wholly neglect this truth. Indeed, they were eager to avail themselves of picturesque suggestions on the lines here indicated. Yet they used these motives mainly as adjuncts to themes of greater moment, and subordinated them to what was deemed some loftier subject. Consequently, these aspects of life did not receive the attention they deserve; and the stores of beauty inherent in human industries have been only partially developed. It is the business of Democratic Art to unfold them fully. The time has come when the noble and beautiful qualities of the people demand a prominent place among worthy artistic motives.

An arduous task lies before the arts, if they are to bring themselves into proper relation with the people; not, as is vulgarly supposed, because the people will debase their standard, but because it will be hard for them to express the real dignity, and to satisfy the keen perceptions and the pure taste of the people.

There is a danger lest the solution of this problem should

suffer from being approached too consciously. What we want is simplicity, emotional directness, open-mindedness, intelligent sympathy, keen and yet reverent curiosity, the scientific combined with the religious attitude toward fact. It will not do to be doctrinaire or didactic. Patronage and condescension are the worst of evils here. The spirit of Count Tolstoi, if that could descend in some new Pentecost, would prepare the world for Democratic Art.

Above all things, the middle-class conception of life must be transcended. Decency, comfort, sobriety, maintenance of appearances, gradual progression up a social ladder which is scaled by tenths of inches, the chapel or the church, the gig or the barouche, the growing balance at one's banker's, the addition of esquire to our name or of a red rosette to our button-hole, the firm resolve to keep well abreast with next-door neighbours, if not ahead of them, in business and respectability—all these things, which characterise the middle-class man wherever he appears, are good in their way. It were well that the people should incorporate these virtues. But there are corresponding defects in the *bourgeoisie* which have to be steadily rejected—an unwillingness to fraternise, an incapacity for comradeship, a habit of looking down on so-called inferiors, a contempt for hand-labour, a confusion of morality with prejudice and formula, a tendency to stifle religion in the gas of dogmas and dissenting shibboleths, an obstinate insensibility to ideas. Snobbery and Pharisaism, in one form or another, taint the middle-class to its core. Self-righteousness, and personal egotism, and ostrich-fear corrode it. We need to deliver our souls from these besetting sins, and to rise above them into more ethereal atmosphere. The man of letters, the artist, who would fain prove himself adequate to Democracy in its noblest sense, must emerge from earthy vapours of complacent self, and artificial circumstances, and decaying feudalism. It is his privilege to be free, and to represent freedom. It is his

function to find a voice, a mode of utterance, an ideal of form, which shall be on a par with nature delivered from unscientific canons of interpretation, and with mankind delivered from obsolescent class distinctions.

V.

Whitman offers enormous difficulties to the critic who wishes to deal fairly with him. The grotesqueness of his language and the uncouth structure of his sentences render it almost impossible to do justice to the breadth of his thought and the sublimity of his imagination. He ought to be taken in large draughts, to be lived with in long solitudes. His peculiar mode of utterance suffers cruelly by quotation. Yet it is needful to extract his very words, in order to escape from the vagueness of a summary.

The inscription placed upon the forefront of "Leaves of Grass" contains this phrase: "I speak the word of the modern, the word EN-MASSE." What this word means for Whitman is expressed at large throughout his writings. We might throw light upon it from the following passage:[1]

> I speak the pass-word primeval—I give the sign of democracy;
> By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms.

Thus Democracy implies the absolute equality of heritage possessed by every man and woman in the good and evil of this life. It also involves the conception that there is nothing beautiful or noble which may not be discovered in the simplest human being. As regards physical structure:[2]

> Whoever you are! how superb and how divine is your body, or any part of it.

---

[1] "Walt Whitman," 24. I quote from the New York edition of 1867, being unable to follow the changes in subsequent re-issues of Whitman's works.

[2] Starting from "Paumanok," 14.

As regards emotion and passions which throb and pulsate in the individual:[1]

Wherever the human heart beats with terrible throes out of its ribs.

"Whoever" and "wherever" are the emphatic words in these quotations. The human body in itself is august; the heart has tragedy implicit in its life-beats. It does not signify *whose* body, or *whose* heart. Here, there, and everywhere, the seeing eye finds majesty, the sentient intelligence detects the stuff of drama.

The same principle is applied to the whole sphere of nature. Miracles need not be sought in special occurrences, in phenomena which startle us out of our ordinary way of regarding the universe:[2]

To me, every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
Every inch of space is a miracle,
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same,
Every cubic foot of the interior swarms with the same;
Every spear of grass—the frames, limbs, organs of men and women, and all that concern them,
All these to me are unspeakable miracles.

At this point science shakes hands with the democratic ideal. We are not forced to gaze upon the starry heavens, or to shudder at islands overwhelmed by volcanic throes, in order to spy out the marvellous. Wonders are always present in the material world, as in the spiritual:[3]

A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books.

The heroic lies within our reach, if we but stretch a finger forth to touch it:[4]

Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no less to me than the Gods of the antique wars;
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,
Their brawny limbs passing safe over charred laths—their white foreheads whole and unhurt out of the flames.

---

[1] "Walt Whitman," 33.
[2] "Miracles."
[3] "Walt Whitman," 154.
[4] Ibid., 41.

Whitman expels miracles from the region of mysticism, only to find a deeper mysticism in the world of which he forms a part, and miracles in commonplace occurrences. He dethrones the gods of old pantheons, because he sees God everywhere around him. He discrowns the heroes of myth and romance ; but greets their like again among his living comrades. What is near to his side, beneath his feet, upon the trees around him, in the men and women he consorts with, bears comparison with things far off and rarities imagined : [1]

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars. . .
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlours of heaven. . .
And I could come every afternoon of my life to look at the farmer's girl boiling her iron tea-kettle and baking short-cake.

It is the faculty of the seer, of one who has understood the wonder of the world, whose eyes pierce below the surface, to recognise divinity in all that lives and breathes upon our planet: [2]

Painters have painted their swarming groups, and the centre figure of all ;
From the head of the centre figure spreading a nimbus of gold-coloured light ;
But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head without its nimbus of gold-coloured light ;
From my hand, from the brain of every man and woman it streams, effulgently flowing for ever.

Pursuing this line of thought into the region of plastic art, we find the elements of dignity and beauty apparent in all forms of sane and healthy manhood : [3]

The expression of the face balks account ;
But the expression of a well-made man appears not only in his face,
It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously in the joints of his hips and wrists ;
It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of his waist and knees —dress does not hide him ;
The strong, sweet, supple quality he has, strikes through the cotton and flannel.

---

[1] "Walt Whitman," 31. [2] "Leaves of Grass," 4.
[3] "I sing the Body Electric," 2.

To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem, perhaps more;
You linger to see his back, and the back of his neck and shoulder-side.

Minor passages from Whitman's writings might be culled in plenty, which illustrate these general principles. He is peculiarly rich in subjects indicated for the sculptor or the painter, glowing with his own religious sense of beauty inherent in the simplest folk:[1]

The beauty of all adventurous and daring persons,
The beauty of wood-boys and wood-men, with their clear, untrimmed faces.

. . . . . .

Coming home with the silent and dark-cheeked bush-boy—riding behind him at the drape of the day.

. . . . . .

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses—the block sways underneath on its tied-over chain;
The negro that drives the dray of the stone-yard—steady and tall he stands, poised on one leg on the string-piece;
His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast, and loosens over his hip-band;
His glance is calm and commanding—he tosses the slouch of his hat away from his forehead;
The sun falls on his crispy hair and moustache—falls on the black of his polished and perfect limbs.

Detached from their context, the paragraphs which I have quoted suffer from apparent crudity and paradox. It is only by absorbing Whitman's poems in copious draughts, as I have said, by submitting to his manner and sympathising with his mood, that a conception can be formed of the wealth with which he scatters plastic suggestions, and of the precision with which he notes down line and colour.

The essence of Democratic Art, so far as Whitman helps us to understand it, has been sufficiently indicated. The divine in nature and humanity is everywhere, if we can penetrate the husk of commonplace and reach the poetry of things. There are, indeed, degrees in its manifestation. Special revelations, as in the life of Buddha or of Christ for

[1] "Song of the Broad Axe," 3; "Walt Whitman," 33; ibid., 13.

instance, do not rank in the same class with the "ever recurring miracle of the sunrise." The heroism of an engine-driver, performing his duty, has not exactly the same moral quality, the same complexity of spiritual forces in play together at one moment, as the self-dedication of Menoikeus for the welfare of his native city, or the oblation of their lives by Cratinus and Aristodemus in order to save Athens from a god-sent plague.

The pioneer of Democratic Art wishes mainly to remind the world that our eyes have too long been blinded to one cardinal truth—the truth that virtues and beauties, wherever found, are of like quality, and their essence equally divine. Whitman insists upon this truth in a passage, which sounds paradoxical, but the grotesqueness of which is calculated to arouse intelligence:[1]

> Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty angels with shirts bagged out at their waists;
> The snag-toothed hostler, with red hair, redeeming sins past and to come,
> Selling all he possesses, travelling on foot to fee lawyers for his brother, and sit by him while he is tried for forgery.

The resplendent manhood of Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, "starred from Jehovah's gorgeous armoury," is of like quality with that of the three reapers. Do what we will, our imagination cannot transcend the stalwart strength of thews and sinews. We can clothe this strength with grace, gift it with ethereal charm, inspire it with ideal fancy, wrap it around in religious mystery. But the beautiful, strong body of the man remains the central fact for art. In like manner, the spirit of Christ revives in the poor, ugly drudge, "despised and rejected of men," like Paul, "of presence weak, of speech contemptible," who devotes his substance and his time to support and, if possible, to save an erring brother.

This piercing through gauds and trimmings, this unmasking and unbaring of appearances, this recognition of divinity in

[1] "Walt Whitman," 41.

all things, is the secret of Democratic Art. It is not altogether different from what Jesus meant when he said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, ye do it unto me." Nor does the supreme doctrine of redemption through self-sacrifice and suffering lose in significance if we extend it from One, imagined a pitiful and condescending God, to all who for a worthy cause have endured humiliation, pain, an agonising death. Not to make Christ less, but to make him the chief of a multitude, the type and symbol of triumphant heroism, do we think of the thousands who have died on battle-fields, in torture-chambers, at the stake, from lingering misery, as expiators and redeemers, in whom the lamp of the divine spirit shines clearly for those who have the eyes to see.

VI.

The most perplexing branch of our inquiry has to be affronted, when we ask the question: What kind of literature and art is demanded by Democracy? How is Art to prove its power by satisfying the needs and moral aspirations of the people who are sovereign in a democratic age?

The conditions under which art exists at the present time render a satisfactory answer to this question well-nigh impossible. In the past epochs, Greek, Mediæval, Italian, Elizabethan, Louis XIV., Persian, Japanese, the arts had a certain unconscious and spontaneous *rapport* with the nations which begat them, and with the central life-force of those nations at the moment of their flourishing. Whether that central energy was aristocratic, as in Hellas; or monarchic, as in France; or religious, as in mediæval Europe; or intellectual, as in Renaissance Italy; or national, as in Elizabethan England; or widely diffused like a fine gust of popular intelligence, as in Japan; signified comparatively little. Art expressed what the people had of noblest and sincerest, and was appreciated by the people. No abrupt division separated

the nation from the poets who gave a voice to the nation. The case is altered now. On the one hand we have huge uncultivated populations, trained to mechanical industries and money-making, aggregated in unwieldy cities or distributed over vast tracts of imperfectly subdued territory, composed of heterogeneous racial elements, the *colluvies omnium gentium*, reduced by commerce and science and politics to a complex of shrewdly-acting, keenly-trafficking, dumbly-thinking personalities, bound together by superficial education in the commonest rudiments of knowledge, without strong national notes of difference, and without any specific bias toward a particular form of self-expression. On the other hand we have cosmopolitan men of letters, poets, painters, sculptors, architects, living for the most part upon the traditions of the past, working these up into new shapes of beauty with power and subtlety, but taking no direct hold on the masses, of whom they are contentedly ignorant, manifesting in no region of the world a marked national type of utterance, embodying no religion in their work, destined apparently to bequeath to the future an image of the nineteenth century in its confused Titanic energy, diffused culture, and mental chaos.

Is Democratic Art possible in these circumstances? Can we hope that the men who write poems, paint pictures, carve statues, shall enter once again into vital *rapport* with the people who compose the nations—the people who are now so far more puissant and important than they ever were before in the world's history? Is there to be any place for art in the real life of the future? Or are we about to realise the dream of Dupont in De Musset's satirical dialogue?

> Sur deux rayons de fer un chemin magnifique
> De Paris à Péking ceindra ma république.
> Là, cent peuples divers, confondant leur jargon,
> Feront une Babel d'un colossal wagon.
> Là, de sa roue en feu le coche humanitaire
> Usera jusqu'aux os les muscles de la terre.

Du haut de ce vaisseau les hommes stupéfaits
Ne verront qu'une mer de choux et de navets.
Le monde sera propre et net comme une écuelle ;
L'humanitairerie en fera sa gamelle,
Et le globe rasé, sans barbe ni cheveux,
Comme un grand potiron roulera dans les cieux.

In a word, do the people, in this democratic age, possess qualities which are capable of evoking a great art from the sympathy of men of genius? Or is art destined to subside lower and lower into a kind of Byzantine decrepitude, as the toy of a so-called cultivated minority?

It is questionable whether Whitman will help us to see light in these perplexities. Yet he has a burning belief in Democracy; and what is more, he is one of the very few great writers now alive who was born among the people, who has lived with the people, who understands and loves them thoroughly, and who dedicated his health and energies to their service in a time of overwhelming national anxiety.

VII.

Whitman is firmly persuaded that the real greatness of a nation or an epoch has never been, and can never be, tested by material prosperity. The wealth and strength, the mechanical industries, the expansive vigour, the superabundant population of a state, constitute its body only. These will impose upon the world, control the present, and be a fact to reckon with for many generations. Yet these must eventually pass away, and sink into oblivion, unless the race attains to consciousness and noble spiritual life. Literature and art compose the soul which informs that colossal body with vitality, and which will continue to exist after the material forces of the race have crumbled into nothingness. Hellas lives ideally in Homer, Pheidias, Æschylus; Israel, in the Prophets and the Psalms; the Middle Ages, in Dante; Feudalism, in Shakespeare. But where is Phœnicia, where

is Carthage? Nothing survives to symbolise their greatness, because they lacked ideas and ideal utterance.

In America, Whitman finds the material conditions of a puissant nation; but he does not find the spirit of a nation. The body is there, growing larger and grander every day, for ever acquiring fresh equipments and more powerful appliances. Meanwhile the soul, the ideality of art and literature, commensurate with this gigantic frame, is wanting.

Viewed, to-day, from a point of view sufficiently over-arching, the problem of humanity all over the civilised world is social and religious, and is to be finally met and treated by literature. *The priest departs, the divine literatus comes.*[1] Never was anything more wanted than, to-day, and here in The States, the poet of the modern is wanted, or the great literatus of the modern.[2]

What is our religion? he asks. "A lot of churches, sects, etc., the most dismal phantasms I know, usurp the name of religion."

What is our national prosperity? "The magician's serpent in the fable ate up all the other serpents; and money-making is our magician's serpent, remaining to-day sole master of the field."

What does our huge material expansion amount to? "It is as if we were somehow being endowed with a vast and more and more thoroughly appointed body, and then left with little or no soul."

What are our cities? "A sort of dry and flat Sahara appears—these cities, crowded with petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms, playing meaningless antics."

What is our boasted culture? "Do you term that perpetual, pistareen, paste-pot work American art, American drama, taste, verse?" Instead of poets corresponding to the pitch and vigour of the race, he sees "a parcel of dandies and

[1] These, and all other italics, are mine; intended to direct attention to the main points, as I conceive them, in my quotations from Whitman.

[2] This and the following extracts are taken from "Democratic Vistas."

ennuyees, dapper little gentlemen from abroad, who flood us with their thin sentiment of parlours, parasols, piano-songs, tinkling rhymes, the five hundredth importation, or whimpering and crying about something, chasing one aborted conceit after another, and for ever occupied in dyspeptic amours with dyspeptic women."[1]

After this fashion, with superfluous reiteration, and considerable asperity, Whitman pours forth his deep-felt conviction of America's spiritual inadequacy.

But what does he demand in lieu of those "most dismal phantasms, which usurp the name of religion;" in lieu of "the magician's serpent, money-making;" in lieu of the "Sahara of frivolous and petty cities;" in lieu of "paste-pot work," and "dapper little gentlemen," and "tinkling rhymes," and "dyspeptic amours"? Democracy in the cradle, in its stronghold, as it seems, is infected with these congenital diseases. Let us attempt to analyse what he proposes, and how he thinks the vital forces of the future are to be developed.

Whitman maintains that the cardinal elements of national greatness are robust character, independent personality, sincere religiousness. He contends that the democratic idea, properly grasped and systematically applied to conduct, will suffice to reconstitute society upon a sound basis, and to supply the modern nations with the ideality they lack.

Of all this, and these lamentable conditions, to breathe into them the breath recuperative of sane and heroic life, I say a new founded literature, not merely to copy and reflect existing surfaces, or pander to what is called taste—not only to amuse, pass away time, celebrate the beautiful, the refined, the past, or exhibit technical, rhythmic, or grammatical dexterity—but a *literature underlying life, religious, consistent with science, handling the elements and forces with competent power, teaching*

[1] "Dyspeptic amours with dyspeptic women," is a fine motto for the American society novel. So is another of Whitman's phrases: "The sly settee and the adulterous, unwholesome couple," for the modern French novel.

and training men—and, as perhaps the most precious of its results, achieving the redemption of woman out of those incredible holds and webs of silliness, millinery, and every kind of dyspeptic depletion—and thus insuring to The States a strong and sweet female race, a race of perfect mothers—is what is needed.

In culture, as it at present exists, the forces are alien and antagonistic to Democracy. Therefore Whitman attacks it vigorously in a long polemical argument:

Dominion strong is the body's; dominion stronger is the mind's. What has filled, and fills to-day our intellect, our fancy, furnishing the standards therein, is yet foreign. The great poems—Shakespeare included—are poisonous to the idea of the pride and dignity of the common people, the life-blood of Democracy. The models of our literature, as we get it from other lands, ultramarine, have had their birth in courts, and basked and grown in castle sunshine; all smells of princes' favours. Of workers of a certain sort, we have, indeed, plenty, contributing after their kind; many elegant, many learned, all complacent. But, touched by the national test, or tried by the standards of Democratic personality, they wither to ashes. I say I have not seen a single writer, artist, lecturer, or what not, that has confronted the voiceless, but ever erect and active, pervading, underlying will and typic aspiration of the land, in a spirit kindred to itself.

Culture is good enough in its way; but it is not what forms a manly personality, a sound and simple faith. "As now taught, accepted, and carried out, *are not the processes of culture rapidly creating a class of supercilious infidels, who believe in nothing?* Shall a man lose himself in countless masses of adjustments, and be so shaped with reference to this, that, and the other, that the simply good and healthy, and brave parts of him are reduced and chipped away, like the bordering of box in a garden? You can cultivate corn, and roses, and orchards; but who shall cultivate the primeval forests, the mountain peaks, the ocean, and the tumbling gorgeousness of the clouds? Lastly—is the readily given reply that culture only seeks to help, systematise, and put in attitude the elements of fertility and power, a conclusive reply?" The only culture useful to Democracy is bound to aim less at polish and refinement of taste than at the bracing

of character. "It must have for its spinal meaning *the formation of typical personality of character, eligible to the uses of the high average of men*—and not restricted by conditions ineligible to the masses. The best culture will always be that of the manly and courageous instincts, and loving perceptions, and of self-respect."

Since you cannot cultivate the primeval forests, and so forth, you must study and assimilate them. Since the people do not need to be refined in taste, but to be braced in character, you must penetrate their character and reproduce it in ideal conceptions. The right formative influences for modern literature and art have therefore to be sought in the people themselves; in the principles of independence and equality, of freedom, brotherhood, and comradeship, which are inherent in Democracy, and by right of which Democracy enfolds a religious ideal comparable to the spiritual liberty of the Gospel.

Did you, too, O friend, suppose Democracy was only for elections, for politics, or for a party name? I say Democracy is only of use there that it may pass on and come to its flower and fruits in manners, in the highest forms of interaction between men, and their beliefs—in Religion, Literature, colleges, and schools—Democracy in all public and private life, and in the Army and Navy. I have intimated that, as a paramount scheme, it has yet few or no full realisers and believers. I do not see, either, that it owes any serious thanks to noted propagandists or champions, or has been essentially helped, though often harmed by them. . . . It is not yet, there or anywhere, the fully received, the fervid, the absolute faith. I submit, therefore, that the fruition of Democracy on aught like a grand scale, resides altogether in the future.

Meanwhile, for those who believe that national greatness can only be tested by the spirit which a people manifests, it remains to fix attention firmly on the permanent and indestructible significance of arts and letters:

The literature, songs, æsthetics, etc., of a country *are of importance principally because they furnish the materials and suggestions of personality for the women and men of that country*, and enforce them in a thousand effective ways.

But what has culture, as yet, done to strengthen the personality of the millions of America?

When I mix with these interminable swarms of alert turbulent, good-natured, independent citizens, mechanics, clerks, young persons—at the idea of this mass of men, so fresh and free, so loving and so proud, a singular awe falls upon me. I feel, with dejection and amazement, that among our geniuses and talented writers or speakers, few or none have yet really spoken to this people, or created a single image-making work that could be called for them—or absorbed the central spirit and the idiosyncrasies which are theirs, and which, thus, in highest ranges, so far remain entirely uncelebrated, unexpressed.

Yet I have dreamed, merged in that hidden-tangled problem of our fate, whose long unravelling stretches mysteriously through time—dreamed out, portrayed, hinted already—a little or a larger band—a band of brave and true, unprecedented yet—armed and equipped at every point—the members separated, it may be, by different dates and states, or south, or north, or east, or west—Pacific or Atlantic—a year, a century here, and other centuries there—but always one, compact in soul, conscience-conserving, God-inculcating, inspired achievers, not only in Literature, the greatest art, but achievers in all art—a new, undying order, dynasty, from age to age transmitted—a band, a class, at least as fit to cope with current years, our dangers, needs, as those who, for their times, so well, in armour or in cowl, upheld and made illustrious, the feudal, priestly world. To offset chivalry, indeed, those vanquished countless knights, and the old altars, abbeys, all their priests, ages and strings of ages, a knightlier and more sacred cause to-day demands, and shall supply, in a New World, to larger, grander work, more than the counterpart and tally of them.

VIII.

So far I have followed Whitman in his polemic against the culture of his country and this century. Many of his prophetic utterances will appear inapplicable to Europe. Yet Democracy, whether we like it or not, has to be faced and accepted in the Old as well as the New World. Here, therefore, as across the Atlantic, Democracy is bound to produce an ideal of its own, or to "prove the most tremendous failure of time." Here, as there, "long enough have the people been listening to poems in which common humanity, deferential, bends low, humiliated, acknowledging superiors." And yet, here, as there, the people have arrived at empire.

It is no longer possible to apostrophise them in the words of Campanella's famous sonnet:

> The people is a beast of muddy brain
> That knows not its own strength, and therefore stands
> Loaded with wood and stone; the powerless hands
> Of a mere child guide it with bit and rein:
> One kick would be enough to break the chain;
> But the beast fears, and what the child demands
> It does; nor its own terror understands,
> Confused and stupefied by bugbears vain.
> Most wonderful! with its own hand it ties
> And gags itself—gives itself death and war
> For pence doled out by kings from its own store.
> Its own are all things between earth and heaven;
> But this it knows not; and if one arise
> To tell this truth, it kills him unforgiven.

In Europe, again, as in America, the founts of earlier inspiration are failing. Classical antiquity and romance cannot supply perennial nutriment for modern art. The literary revolution which I described at the beginning of this essay, dethroned those elder deities and threw the sanctuary of the spirit open. Science, the sister of Democracy, brings man face to face with nature, and with God in nature. A more ethereal spirituality than has yet been dreamed of begins to penetrate our conceptions of the universe, of law, of duty, of human rights and destinies. Art and literature, if they are to hold their own, must adapt themselves to these altered conditions. They must have a faith—not in their own excellence as art, and in their several styles and rhythms—but in their mission and their power to present the genius of the age, its religion and its character, with the same force as the Greek sculptors presented paganism and the Italian painters presented mediæval Catholicity. If they cannot ascend to this endeavour they are lost.

"Literature, strictly considered," says Whitman, "has never recognised the People, and, whatever may be said, does not to-day. . . . I know nothing more rare, even in this country,

than a fit scientific estimate and reverent appreciation of the People—*of their measureless wealth of latent power and capacity, their vast artistic contrasts of lights and shades*, with, in America, their entire reliability in emergencies, and a certain breadth of historic grandeur, of peace or war, far surpassing all the vaunted samples of book-heroes, or any *haut-ton* coteries, in all the records of the world."

This assertion he proceeds to support by reference to the great American war. "Probably no future age can know, but I well know, how the gist of this fiercest and most resolute of the world's warlike contentions resided exclusively in the unnamed, unknown rank and file; and how the brunt of its labour of death was, to all essential purposes, Volunteered." "Grand common stock! to me the accomplished and convincing growth, prophetic of the future; proof undeniable to sharpest sense *of perfect beauty, tenderness, and pluck*, that never feudal lord, nor Greek, nor Roman breed yet rivalled."

We now understand what Whitman means by "the divine average"; why he exclaims: "Ever the most precious in the common. Ever the fresh breeze of field, or hill, or lake is more than any palpitation of fans, though of ivory, and redolent with perfume; and the air is more than the costliest perfumes."

Finally, something must be said about Whitman's attitude toward the past. His polemic against contemporary culture, his firm insistence upon the fact that "the mind, which alone builds the permanent edifice, haughtily builds *for itself*," and that consequently a great nation like America, a new principle like Democracy, is bound to find its own ideal expression or "to prove the most tremendous failure of time"—all this may blind us to his reverence for the arts and literatures of races and of ages which have passed away. How easy it would be to assume a contempt for history in Whitman is clear enough to students of his writings.

From the pages which he dedicates to the use and value of bygone literatures it will be sufficient to extract the following paragraph:

Gathered by geniuses of city, race, or age, and put by them in the highest of art's forms, namely, the literary form, the peculiar combinations, and the outshows of that city, race, and age, its particular modes of the universal attributes and passions, its faiths, heroes, lovers and gods, wars, traditions, struggles, crimes, emotions, joys (or the subtle spirit of these) having been passed on to us to illumine our own selfhood and its experiences—what they supply, indispensable and highest, if taken away, *nothing else in all the world's boundless storehouses could make up to us or ever return again.*

This is an emphatic reassertion of the principle that "dominion strong is the body's; dominion stronger is the mind's." Not for an age or nation, but for all humanity and all time, abides the truth that material strength and greatness are but bone, and thew, and sinew; literature and art constitute the soul. Therefore the prophets, poets, thinkers, builders, sculptors, painters, musicians of past ages and of foreign lands, abide imperishable, shining like suns and stars fixed in the firmament of man's immortal mind. Stupendous are they indeed, but distant, unfamiliar; appealing indirectly to modern hearts and brains. Our admiration for them, the use we make of them, the lessons we learn from them, must not degrade us into the frivolity of imitative culture. We have to bear steadfastly in mind that it is our duty to emulate them by creating corresponding monuments of our own spirit, suns and stars which shall shine with them "in the spaces of that other heaven, the Kosmic intellect, the soul."

Ye powerful and resplendent ones! ye were, in your atmospheres, grown not for America, but rather for her foes, the feudal and the old—while our genius is Democratic and modern. Yet could ye, indeed, but breathe your breath of life into our New World's nostrils—not to enslave us, as now, but, for our needs, to breed a spirit like your own—perhaps (dare we say it?) to dominate, even destroy, what yourselves have left! On your plane, and no less, but even higher and wider, will I mete and

measure for our wants to-day and here. I demand races of orbic bards, with unconditional, uncompromising sway. Come forth, sweet democratic despots of the west!

IX.

Thus, the upshot of Walt Whitman's message is that the people, substantial as they are, and full of all the qualities which might inspire a world-literature, have up to the present time found no representative in poetry and art. The *sacer vates* of Democracy has not appeared. "The fruition of Democracy, on aught like a grand scale, resides altogether in the future."

This is not the place to inquire how far Whitman has himself fulfilled the conditions of writing for the people. Judged by his acceptance in America, he can hardly be said to have succeeded in his own lifetime. The many-headed beast there, if it has not literally "trampled him in gore," turns a deaf ear to his voice, and treats him with indifference. Hitherto he has won more respect from persons of culture in Great Britain than from the divine average of The States.

X.

After reading the foregoing pages, some one will perhaps object that Democratic Art is nothing new, and that the thing itself called for the invention of no such name to designate it. "Have not the eyes of all but pedants and precisians been open to the poetry of common objects and of humble people?" He will then point to Theocritus and Longus; cite Virgil's Georgics and Bucolics; enlarge upon Dutch painting; run through the list of Defoe, Hogarth, Smollett, Morland, Wilkie, Crabbe; and wind up with special references to certain passages of the Elizabethan Drama.

Such reasoning does not meet the arguments advanced by Whitman; nor does it satisfy the claims which those who comprehend the word Democracy put forward. Yet it is

worthy of consideration, if only for the sake of defining what is meant by Democratic Art.

The faculty for seeing beauty in the simplest people and the commonest things has, indeed, been granted to all poets and all artists worthy of the name. But this faculty, in the age on which we now have entered, will need to be exercised in a very different way and with far other earnestness.

When we consider Greek pastorals in verse and prose, or Latin didactic poems upon rural life, we detect a note of condescension, a scrupulous avoidance of bare fact, a studious selection of details agreeable to the cultivated sense. The rustics pose, or are transfigured. Their humanity is toned down to elegance, and the landscape is sketched in accordance with the literary ideal of Arcadia. This way of treatment implies a suppression of the true and a suggestion of the false. While exalting imaginary virtues of simplicity, contentment, and industry, these idyllic and didactic poets ignore reality and make playthings of their models. From their insincerity we have derived the intolerable sham of the modern pastoral. What Democratic Art demands is an intelligent representation of peasant-life in its actuality: not such a distorted picture as Zola painted in "La Terre," where all the ugliest details are artfully extracted and agglomerated; but something which shall reveal the essential qualities of human virtue and vice, of passion and endurance, struggle and achievement, capacity for high and sordid action, in tillers of the soil. The poet and the artist must repel the temptation to prettify his subject by the addition of masquerade refinement, or to vilify it by exposing only what is brutal. He must be ready to extract its specific quality from the phase of life he treats, believing that it contains its own tragedy, its own dignity, its suffering, crime, pride, nobility, and baseness. He must be able to recognise that there is as much real beauty in the peasant's husk as in the prince's—a russet beech-nut being no less beautiful than the ruddy rind of

a pomegranate. He must feel that the implements of labour, the attire of reaper or of milkmaid, the woodland ways and field-paths of such folk, the light falling upon their homestead, and the simplicity of its interior, offer peculiar elements of loveliness which are wanting to the sumptuous buildings, stately terraces, and splendid costumes of Versailles or Villa d'Este.

In Dutch painting we find a genuine species, but a narrow species, of the type in question. There is no note of condescension, no avoidance of fact, no selection of details pleasing to the cultivated taste. Sensuous enjoyment of a vulgar sort has been sympathetically felt, and rendered with artistic delight in its surroundings. The beauty of the husk, such as it is, receives ample justice. Loving care has been expended on the development of light and shadow, colour, the modelling of household gear, the delineation of industries and occupations. But the result is unspiritual; the poetry, for the most part, is poetry of the pot-house. Democratic Art wants more than this. It does not merely look for humorous, or comic, or sensual suggestions from the people.

Hogarth and the painters of his kind, who have addicted themselves to satire, need not detain us long. In "The Idle Apprentice," as in "Marriage à la Mode," Hogarth exposed the vices of society. His touch was impartial; and, in so far, he deserves to be called democratic. But the true note of Democratic Art, its interpretation of the people to themselves, its creation of a popular ideal, its vindication of the loveliness and dignity of human life apart from class distinctions, its recognition of the beauty which is inseparable from certain crafts and occupations, its perception of the divine in average human beings, cannot be demanded from Hogarth and his school. They, as satirists, show us chiefly that men can be bad alike in palaces and hovels.

We find more of sterling quality in Crabbe: if only Crabbe were not so grim, so weighed down with the prosaic misery

of existence. Crabbe has the democratic sympathy ; but circumstances prevented him from ascending to the democratic exultation. And here, too, Wordsworth, who might be claimed as a pioneer of Democratic Art in England, fails to strike the right note. He has much of the needful feeling, but too much of the interdicted condescension. In all his work there remains a certain aloofness from the subject, and a tendency to improve it for moral purpose. Born in an aristocratic age, he preaches to the people, or ostentatiously takes lessons from them, or shows obtrusively that he is studying them. There is in Wordsworth little of frank comradeship or hearty faith, an excessive amount of what Whitman calls "copious dribble" about men and forces discerned by him in a complacent, purblind fashion.

It is hardly worth while pausing to consider whether Elizabethan poetry is Democratic. The whole body of literature belonging to that age was produced under the influence of monarchical and feudal ideas, and is therefore representative of an order which Democracy displaces. Its true greatness consists in a burning national enthusiasm ; but the nation is still regarded as a hierarchy of well-defined classes. The sovereign, peers spiritual and temporal, clerks and clergy, untitled gentry, lawyers in their several degrees, yeomen, merchants, artisans, and peasants, build up society. Each class has its own duties, its own privileges, and enjoys that self-respect which proceeds from the sense of an assured immutable position in the commonwealth. There is, therefore, nothing really democratic in the manliness, the freedom, and the joyousness of Elizabethan poetry. Even the realistic dramas of Heywood and Dekker, which so delightfully set forth the beauty of humble lives and the virtues of the people, are not democratic. Whitman is right in saying that "Shakespeare is incarnated, uncompromising Feudalism in literature" ; nor is the truth of this remark affected by the fact that when Shakespeare lived, the feudal order he so

vividly portrayed had practically become a thing of the past. Its vigour and utility decayed during the Wars of the Roses. But time's mutations are slowly effected in Great Britain ; and three centuries since Shakespeare's entrance upon his career as dramatist have not sufficed to purge the English mind of feudal notions. They survive, amid all changes of society, in the form of snobbery, class prejudice, lord worship, and stupid talk about the lower orders.

This being the case, it is not easy to indicate anything in our literature and art which bears the democratic hall-mark. Other European nations present the same general features of decayed, yet still pervasive feudalism. Switzerland, where democracy has been achieved in practice, has developed no genius for art creation.

Yet a few examples may be selected, which seem in part at least to yield the quality desired. Blake's lyrics, George Sand's village stories, Gotthelf's "Ulrich," George Eliot's "Silas Marner," Pierre Loti's "Mon Frère Yves," Rudyard Kipling's "Soldiers Three," Clough's "Bothie," some of Thomas Hardy's Wessex Novels, in literature, are on the right track. So is the great work of the Russian novelists, Turgeneff, Tolstoi, Dostoieffsky.

In art we may speak of Millet, so profound in feeling, so dumbly eloquent, so tragic ; of Mason, who, in spite of superficial affectation, expressed the poetry of simple life with a wonderful sense of music ; of Frederick Walker, whose young working-men and vagrant women assumed the grandeur of Pheidias without loss of reality ; of Hamo Thornycroft, whose statue of the "Mower" deserves to be placed in the same rank with Walker's picture, "At the Gate."

These instances are not meant to be exhaustive ; nor are all the works mentioned of equal merit. I fear that, with the exception of Millet's pictures and the Russian novels, they would find but little favour in the eyes of our aspiring and exacting critic Whitman. Such as they are, however, they

illustrate to some extent the ideality which must in course of time be extracted from the people, if art is to regain vitality under the conditions of a Democratic age.

The duty of art in the immediate future is to manifest the immanence of the divine in nature and man. While doing so —pursuing her own chase of beauty, not moralising and not preaching, but seeing and unmasking the God hidden in the husk of things—art will once more serve the permanent spiritual needs of humanity. This is Democratic Art. The kingdom of the Father has passed; the kingdom of the Son is passing; the kingdom of the Spirit begins.

LANDSCAPE.

I.

A VOLUME might be devoted to landscape, if this subject were to be exhaustively discussed. Nor could the task be performed without full knowledge of the arts and extensive familiarity with the work of innumerable painters in all countries. My aim is not of this ambitious nature. In the present essay I wish to indicate what it is in modern ways of thinking and of feeling, which has given so great an importance to scenery in our literature and figurative art.

It is an error to suppose that the ancients were insensible to the charm and beauty of external nature. Much has been written about their attitude toward landscape and the parsimony of picturesque description in their poetry. Yet sufficient stress is rarely laid upon the difference between the Greeks and the Romans in this matter. Nor has it been made clear enough, perhaps, that classical literature in its later stages exhibits more of what we may call the modern feeling than we find in Homer and the Attic writers.

The Greek way of regarding nature differed widely from ours, and encouraged a different order of artistic symbolism. In their religion the Greeks deified the powers of the universe under concrete forms of human personality. When they gazed upon sky, earth, and sea, the image of an idealised man or woman intervened between their imaginative reason and the natural object. The mystery of the woods and wilds was Pan. Fauns and Hamadryads started from the leafy shade of forest trees. Tritons blew blasts upon their conch-

shells, careering on the crests of stormy billows. Nereids swam up from azure deeps to glide across the surface of calm ocean. Naiads shrank from sight among fern-tufted fountains. The evening star lured shepherds to his love, leaning in twilight from the ridge of Œta. The dawn, a rosy-fingered damsel, left the couch of gray and shadowy Tithonus. The sun-god stopped his steeds in mid-career at Hera's word, or lent his flaming chariot to mortals for their ruin. The maiden moon bent down at night to kiss her sweetheart in the solitude of Latmos.

Haunted by such conceptions, the poet and the artist could not look on nature as we do. A multitude of fancy-fashioned beings, with distinct characters and with legends of their own, arose between his mind and the external world. Sculpture, the dominant art of the race in its best period, gave substantial shape to these creatures of myth-making imagination. When utterance was sought in verse or in plastic symbolism for the feelings stirred by landscape, all vagueness, all sense of the infinite, which might peradventure have been present to the artist's mind, slumbered there unexpressed and inarticulate. Graceful human forms emerged, and took their place in the forefront of his vision. The rest was but a background, blurred and indistinct. The sentiments belonging to it had no opportunity of coming to self-consciousness.

How widely and deeply this anthropomorphic sympathy with nature penetrated the Hellenic imagination, and determined its poetical creativeness, may be seen in the legends of metamorphosis. The reed by the river-margin had to be a girl pursued by Pan. The cypress was a slender youth on whom the wood-god doted. The pine, nodding to its fall from some high precipice, had erewhile been a maiden rudely clasped by the north wind. A daffodil reflected in the mirror of a lakelet, was Narcissus pining at the sight of his own loveliness. Hyacinths, anemones, sunflowers, almond-blossoms, crocuses—all the "children of the spring" and "nurslings

of the meadows," as Chærêmon called them—were thought of as fair boys or girls beloved by deities. So, when a Greek felt their charm, his mind instinctively reverted to the human tales of passion and of fate, whereof they were for him the living emblems. He did not moralise the pathos of their ephemeral bloom like Herrick, or apply them to his own emotions in didactic mood like Wordsworth. He told their stories again, and spoke of them as Adonis, Clytia, Phyllis, Hyacinthus, Myrrha.

This then was the Greek way of regarding nature; and it persisted in their poetry and art long after the faculty of making myths had been exhausted. Another kind of sentiment for landscape, as we shall presently see, grew up in the course of centuries. But so tenacious and conservative are the forms of art when they have once been stereotyped in verse and plastic shape, that the old legends, hallowed by association, kept their grasp upon the people's mind.

Turning from Greece to Rome, we find ourselves upon an alien soil. The Latin religion, though it had racial affinities with the Hellenic, and though these were emphasized by the early adoption of Greek literature as a standard, remained more abstract in its character, more rigid and utilitarian, less poetical and picturesque. Owing to the barrenness of their mythology, Romans were able to view nature with eyes undazzled by the mirage of the mythopœic fancy. The stiff gods and goddesses of Ovid's "Fasti"—Robigo, Terminus, and the rest of them—intervened with no legendary charm of human fate and passion and of human adolescence between the Latin mind and landscape. Accordingly we find in the earliest and the latest of the Latin poets a feeling akin to our own—the feeling of the natural man returning to the womb which bore him and the breasts which gave him suck—when these came close to Nature in her solitudes. The deep and solemn passion of Lucretius, the pathos of Virgil, their common love for the Saturnian earth, their sense of things and

thoughts too deep for tears, sounded in Latin poetry a note we do not hear among the Hellenes. There is in their verse the mystery, the awe, the feeling after an indwelling deity, the communion with nature as nature, which we are accustomed to call modern.

I have elsewhere pointed out that we must look for hybrids in all creations of the Roman genius. By modelling their art upon the Greek type, the Romans precluded themselves from developing a purely national style ; and this is perhaps one reason why the difference between them and their Greek masters, in the matter of landscape, was not made more manifest. We are able, however, to perceive this difference when we have once recognised that their employment of the Greek mythology of metamorphosis remained conventional and artificial.

Virgil deserves Lord Tennyson's felicitous epithet of "landscape-lover" more than any of his predecessors. Before he began to work, Greek art, in Sicilian idyls, and in mural paintings, had entered on a new phase. This Virgil continued, adding a richness of colour, a variety of observation, and a glow of emotion all his own, to the transcripts from nature which abound in his poems. These pictures, however, are suggestions rather than descriptions, exhibiting the finest sense of what is right and fitting in the use of language for pictorial effect.

Horace joins with Persius, Juvenal, and Martial in his keen appreciation of rural simplicity and homeliness, contrasted with the luxuries and vices of the city. Epicurean, Stoic, satirist, man of the world, they are alike true lovers of the country. Their enthusiasm for the farm, the wholesome fare, the rustic table, and the sturdy serving-lad who waits upon them with the blush of honesty and healthful youth, is unaffected. Their vignettes from Sabine or Tuscan hill-sides are touched with the truth and sincerity which spring from real appreciation and keen observation. The same may be said of

Ovid and the elegiac poets, though the former, in his great descriptive poem of the "Metamorphoses," was hampered and overweighted by the burden of a mythology which had no vital hold on his belief.

Catullus freed himself more completely than any of these poets from foreign influences. An Athenian or a Sicilian could hardly have written the episode of Ariadne in the Epithalamium of Peleus and Thetis, with its fresh and vigorous sketches of scenery; or the lines on Sirmium, with its deep home-feeling; or the address to the boat, with its affectionate sympathy for the rock-pluming forests where the planks from which the skiff was built were hewn.

While Latin literature was growing, that of Greece was declining. The process of decadence, however, advanced slowly; and some minor beauties, which had been undeveloped in the earlier stages, now assumed prominence. We find a distinct feeling for landscape, timid and subdued, but delicately true, in the Idyls of Theocritus. The poets of the Anthology, with Meleager at their head, show that the sense of nature had begun to disengage itself from merely mythological associations. Meleager can see flowers without thinking of boys and girls beloved by deities. He calls the narcissus "rain-lover," and the lilies are for him "mountain-wanderers." With the decay of sculpture, painting became an art of more importance. We have many indications that wall-frescoes were a common feature of Græco-Roman architecture. The treatise of Philostratus called εἰκόνες possesses considerable interest, as determining the character of these pictures. It is clear that though figure-subjects of the sculpturesque type still formed the staple of plastic art, scenery was being treated with some degree of intelligent appreciation; and the same conclusion may be arrived at after a study of the Pompeian frescoes. This tendency of painting reacted upon literature. The books of the Greek novelists abound in exquisite landscape detail. Nature is always used

as a background to humanity. But this background is sympathetically felt, and its main features are touched with an evident perception of their own attractiveness. In the hands of the novelists language becomes singularly euphuistic. They develop rhetorical conceits, and coin quaint imagery to convey the æsthetic impression made by natural objects on the human sensibilities.

The Roman poets of the Silver Age respond to this impulse. Passing over Lucan, Valerius Flaccus, Silius Italicus, and Statius, from all of whose works lovely pieces of landscape-description might be culled, I will invite attention to Ausonius, in whom, at the very close of the classical period, modern sentiment seems ready to expand. His poem on the Moselle has always been admired for its mastery of descriptive verse. His elegy on Roses may be read in another essay of this collection, and its prolonged influence through modern literature has there been traced.[1] I shall not therefore dwell on these compositions here. But in order to show how mural painting affected literature, and how a refined feeling for natural beauty was then combined with Hellenic mythology, I will translate the opening lines of his mystical idyl, "Cupido Cruci Affixus," together with its dedication in prose to the poet's "son" Gregorius. The verses describe a fresco in a friend's house, which represented the crucifixion of Cupid by the heroines in Elysium—dames of ancient story, who had long since died for love—and the god's flagellation by his mother with a scourge of roses.

"Tell me," begins the dedicatory epistle; "did you ever see some shadowy fancy painted on a wall? I am sure you have, and that you have kept it in remembrance. At Treves, for instance, in the dining-room of Æolus, there is this picture which I will describe: Cupid is being crucified by women who were lovers—not those of our times, sinners by their own will—but dames of the heroic age, who justify their conscience

[1] "The Pathos of the Rose in Poetry."

and force the god to bow—they whose fate in the fields of lamentation our Virgil hath sung. I gazed upon this work of art with admiration, both for its beauty and its subject. Soon afterwards, the emotion of wonder in my mind merged in a foolish impulse to write verses. Except the theme, nothing pleases me in this production. Yet I submit my by-blow of the Muses to your kind attention. We love even our warts and scars if they are part of us, and not content with having paid the debt to our own natural frailty, seek that these defects in us should win affection. Yet why should I go about to win from you a favourable hearing for the eclogue? I am sure that you will take with kindness what you know to be a thing of mine. This I regard more than that you should praise it. Farewell.[1]

"In those shadowy fields whereof the Muse of Maro sings, where myrtle groves yield gloomy shelter to lost souls of lovers, the dames of old were once assembled for their mystic rites, and each bore emblems of her doom according as she died on earth. They wandered in woodland vast beneath the niggard light, among tresses of wavering reeds and heavy-headed poppies, by silent lakes without a flaw and rivulets that have no murmur in their ripple. Along the margin of

[1] I transcribe the original of these lines :

Aëris in campis, memorat quos Musa Maronis,
Myrteus amentes ubi lucus opacat amantes,
Orgia ducebant heroides et sua quæque,
Ut quondam occiderant, leti argumenta gerebant,
Errantes silva in magna et sub luce maligna,
Inter arundineasque comas gravidumque papaver
Et tacitos sine labe lacus, sine murmure rivos :
Quorum per ripas nebuloso lumine marcent
Fleti olim regum et puerorum nomina flores,
Mirator Narcissus et Œbalides Hyacinthus,
Et Crocus auricomans et murice pictus Adonis,
Et tragico scriptus gemitu Salaminius Aias.
Omnia quæ lacrimis et amoribus anxia maestis
Exercent memores obita jam morte dolores,
Rursus in amissum revocant heroidas ævum.

those waters, dimly seen through twilight, pine flowers upon whose petals writ in tears are names of princes and of boys—Narcissus gazing on his own fair face, and Crocus of the golden curls, and Hyacinth the son of Œbalus, and Adonis dyed in purple hue, and Salaminian Aias stamped with his deep tragic groan. These remembrances of death and sorrow, symbols of lamentation and of love, recall to mind the anguish of stern fates erewhile assoiled and buried in the tomb, and bring before those heroines the memory of scenes enacted by them also in the world above."

The sentiment for nature to which I want to call attention in these lines is exhibited by the poet's sense of atmosphere, his feeling for tone, his subordination of the figures to the composition. The whole forms a picture ; and even the Greek mythology of the flowers is so treated as to recede into a region of symbolic spirituality. The landscape suggested by these two hexameters :

> Inter arundineasque comas gravidumque papaver
> Et tacitos sine labe lacus, sine murmure rivos—

is no less charming than their rhythm is melodiously melancholy. We are transferred to some quiet Umbrian or Tuscan valley after sunset, when the waning pallor of the west slumbers in pools of scarcely flowing water.

II.

The nascent feeling for landscape which we see unfolding in the latest period of Greek and Roman art, had no opportunity of attaining to independence during the first eight centuries which succeeded to the downfall of the Empire. Such sentiments as had existed in the classical age were connected immediately or remotely with polytheism. Christianity introduced a vehemently hostile spirit, which in its reactionary fervour opposed God to nature. The whole fabric of mythological religion was suppressed, and nothing appeared to take its place.

Under the then prevalent conceptions of the universe, no intelligent being could take either scientific or artistic interest in a world considered radically evil and doomed to wrathful overthrow. Man's one business was to work out his salvation, to disengage himself from the earth on which his first parents had yielded to sin, and to wean his heart from the enjoyment of terrestrial delights. Whether he succeeded or not matters little to our argument. In either case the theoretical attitude of mind implied in mediæval Christianity was inimical to knowledge and to art. Beauty came to be regarded as a snare. The phenomena of nature were vilipended as not worth a thought; or if any attention was paid to them in lapidaries, bestiaries, and the like, the childish monastic intellect whimsically subjected them to a system of allegorical interpretation.

Under these influences both literature and the plastic arts decayed. Architecture, the most abstract and utilitarian of the fine arts, bridged over the long tract of æsthetical vacuity between the death of Claudian and the re-birth of poetry in Provence. It owed this continued existence to its disconnection from ideas, and to its ecclesiastical service. Architecture was useful, and it was innocent. Accordingly, it lived a stunted life, while the sister arts were slumbering in the torpor of suspended energy.

The Scandinavians and Teutons, who now had to be absorbed into the fellowship of nations and to be educated by the Church, brought with them nothing which could constitute a new condition for the sense of natural beauty. Like the Greeks, they looked at the world from the point of view of mythology. The cosmic forces were personified in their religious legends as ideal men and women. Stupendous remnants of their pagan imagination survive in Eddic literature. But the study of these sources shows that Norse poetry was ill-adapted to fostering that sympathy with nature *qua* nature, which had begun to germinate in the later stages of Græco-Roman

culture. Such as it was, the dominant civilising energy, that of the Latin Church, laid it under a strict interdict.

Renan observes that the most important product of the Middle Ages was a sentiment of the infinite. This remark, vague as it seems, bears strongly on the subject we are now discussing. Classical polytheism interpolated a multitude of ideal personalities between the mind and nature. All these were swept away, discredited, consigned to oblivion, transmuted into devils, during the ascendency of mediæval Christianity. The soul was left face to face with God, while men and women continued daily to be born and die upon our planet. Thus a vacuum, vast as the universe, arose through the dispeopling of all that intermediate region which had been agreeably filled by gods and goddesses of various degrees. There was the self-conscious spirit of man; there was the transcendent reality of God; there was the earth on which man dwelt, and the heavens to cover it as with a canopy. Instead of a Pantheon or Olympus, swarming with deities—in lieu of a comfortable world inhabited by semi-human personalities—infinity and fact environed human consciousness. Infinity, the vague, incalculable, all-embracing sphere, which God in ways unrealised by mortal fancy filled. Fact, the hard, stern, brutal fabric of man's dwelling-place, with its sufferings acute or blunted, its passions which were sins, its labour which was a curse, its pleasures which were temptations. Infinity and fact, both shadowy, unreal, and unimaginable; God's world and the devil's world; each only valuable to the soul in its *rapport* with man's eternal destiny when time should be no more. That was the new medium within which the genius of our race, when it recovered from the torpor of the glacial epoch, had to move. Infinity and fact. What would happen should theology relax her grasp upon the intellect, and men once more begin to gaze around with curious delight on their terrestrial dwelling-place?

Looking back upon the past, we are able to perceive that

when the twilight of the modern age appeared, when the ancient gods had been forgotten and Christianity had lost a portion of its poignant spell, the arts and science of the present time were quickening, like seeds that slumber through the winter and await the spring. But an intermediate stage of long duration had to be traversed. To this we give the name of Renaissance. In it the intellect of man came painfully and gladly to new life through the discovery of itself and nature.

I cannot expatiate over the prospect here presented to reflection. Having indicated the broad aspect of the Middle Ages in relation to the topic of this essay, it is now my business to show in what way man recovered that nascent sympathy with nature, which had been so rudely interrupted. Landscape is a minor detail in the history of the Renaissance. But it is the one we have to keep in view.

The Latin songs of the thirteenth century, in so far as these touch nature, reveal a genial thawing of the spirit.[1] They dwell on the charm of spring-time in the country, and connect the freedom of the open air with pleasures of the senses. Classical literature is at work as a form-giving influence. But the artistic touch on mythology has altered. Bacchus and Venus and Neptune have ceased to be personalities. They reappear as names and symbols.

The German lyrics of the Minnesingers, the Provençal lyrics of the Troubadours, the Celtic romances of Arthur and his Knights, when these touch nature, are in like manner vernal. The magic of the May pervades them ; the mystery of the woodland enfolds them. They are the utterances of generations for whom life has revived, who have escaped the winter of their discontent and bondage, to whom the world is once more full of wonder-breeding interest.

Humanity, as is natural, engages the poet's first attention.

[1] This subject has been more fully treated in my discourse upon the Carmina Vagorum, entitled "Wine, Women, and Song."

The earth is felt chiefly through the delightfulness of healthy sensations. The stars, and clouds, and tempests of the heavens, the ever-recurring miracle of sunrise, the solemn pageant of sunsetting, are almost as though they were not in this literature. A copse in April, a blooming garden, a grove where birds sing, a storm-swept sea-beach—these are the landscape pictures of that epoch. But gods and goddesses are absent; the flowers are flowers, not Crocus or Adonis; the birds are birds, not Philomela wailing for her ancient wrong; the oaks contain no Hamadryads, and the fountains murmur without Nymphs. Nature, though as yet a mere back-scene to humanity, has emerged as Nature.

At last comes Dante, with his keen incisive touch on natural things, his intense laconic descriptions of the world as it appears:[1]

Dolce color d' oriental zaffiro.

. . . . .

Conobbi il tremolar della marina.

. . . . .

A noi venia la creatura bella
Bianco vestita e nella faccia quale
Par tremolando la mattutina stella.

. . . . .

Qual lodoletta, che in aere si spazia
Prima cantando, e poi tace contenta
Dell' ultima dolcezza che la sazia.

. . . . .

A guisa di leon quando si posa.

. . . . .

Noi andavam per lo vespero attenti
Oltre, quanto potean gli occhi allungarsi,
Contro i raggi serotini e lucenti.

---

[1] Soft colour of oriental sapphire.—I saw and knew the light atremble on the sea-marge.—Toward us came the beauteous being, clothed in white and with a countenance that was as is the dawn-star when it trembles.—Like to a lark which circles free in air, singing at first, and then keeps silence, satisfied with the last sweetness of the note that fills her soul.—In semblance of a lion when he couches.—We walked on through the evening, gazing intently forward so far as eyes could reach, with faces turned to meet the last and lucent rays of daylight.

In these, and in a hundred similar passages of the "Divine Comedy," we feel that the poet has transcended the vagueness of the Middle Ages. A new spirit is awake in the world. Man looks again with open eyes on nature, sees the earth as the ancients saw it, but without the medium of myth through which the Greeks and Romans viewed it.

Contemporaneously with Dante—though Dante hardly shared this movement—there began what is known as the Revival of Learning: that resuscitation of classical literature and art which exercised so potent an influence over the mind of Europe. In so far as the æsthetical appreciation of external nature is concerned, this contact with antiquity was not an unmixed blessing. It did much to emancipate the mind from theological preoccupations. It established a sense of historical continuity, and restored a truer feeling for the relation between mankind and the material universe. But it brought back the old mythology which had previously intervened between the mind and natural objects. And this mythology was no longer believed in. It reappeared as mere machinery, and literary or artistic artifice. Furthermore, the uncritical respect for classical tradition imposed fettering restrictions on creative fancy. For a long space of time, poets thought that they must imitate Virgil or Horace in their descriptions; painters only introduced scenery as an accessory to figure-subjects. Though men could paint the external world like Titian, they dealt sparingly and occasionally with its aspects. To manufacture Tritons, Nymphs, and Fauns was an easy matter for dexterous masters of the human form. These antique personalities were accepted in lieu of waves and woods and streams. They had the double advantage of being less difficult to deal with than the real things they symbolised, and also of possessing the passport of classical tradition. This way of representing nature in figurative art harmonised with the intellectual conditions of the Renaissance. Accordingly,

landscape, or the portraiture of Nature as she is, remained in a subordinate position.

This fact ought not to be attributed to the Revival of Learning only. There is profound truth in the saying that "the proper study of mankind is man." Man awakening to free consciousness at the end of the Middle Ages seized first upon himself as the subject of the highest art. Nature had to wait her turn. And her turn came when the cycle of purely human motives, within the sphere of that period's ideality, had been exhausted. It was at the close of the Italian Renaissance, after Europe had been saturated with the new learning, when science too was born, and men were gazing with purged eyes upon the heavens of Copernicus and "thy clear stars, Galileo," that landscape attained to independence. Five great painters initiated this new departure in the arts. These were Peter Paul Rubens, Nicholas Poussin, Claude Lorraine, Gaspar Poussin, and Salvator Rosa—a Fleming strongly influenced by Italian ideas, three Italianated Frenchmen, and a Neapolitan.[1]

Before their appearance on the scene, landscape-painting had here and there been practised with great ability and sense of beauty on both sides of the Alps. Nothing can surpass the refined fidelity to detail with which John van Eyck drew and coloured that airy prospect over river, city, and snow-clad mountains, seen from the quiet mediæval loggia, in his picture of La Vierge au Donateur. Few transcripts from external nature are more impressive in their map-like, patiently symbolic style than Dürer's Fortune, S. Hubert, and Knight on Horseback in the sombre forest. Gentile da Fabriano's sunrise upon Tuscan hills is like the dawn of life in its quaint childish naïveté. It would be peevish to demand more concentrated poetry in the delineation of blue crags and sun-

[1] Rubens, 1577—1640. N. Poussin, 1594—1665. Claude, 1600—1682. G. Poussin, 1613—1675. S. Rosa, 1615—1673.

swept valleys than Titian gave us, or sweeter idyllic bits of country than the minor Venetians—Bissolo, Basaiti, Cima, Cordegliaghi—introduced as backgrounds to their sacred compositions. Giorgione in his masterpiece at Castelfranco translated the feeling of broad champaign and gently swelling lawns into pure harmonies of gold and brown and green and yellow. Tintoretto proved himself the master of a fitful, passionate, suggestive scenery, turbid with emotion and surcharged with meaning, tuned by imagination to the spiritual key-note of his varying themes. The gentle twilight reaches of Umbrian valleys in Perugino's and young Raphael's pictures have a melancholy charm peculiar to that region. Francia caught their grace, and painted lands of afterglow and dewy peace, with slender stems defined against the spaces of a dreamy, lucid evening sky. Lionardo da Vinci's drawings show that this versatile magician of the arts could sketch a bit of forest with the subtlety of a French draughtsman. Correggio makes us rest beside his holy travellers in pleasant woodlands by the side of babbling water-brooks.[1]

Everywhere, in fact, this art was waiting, ready to emerge. But it had not occurred to masters of the sixteenth century that landscape might be treated as an object in itself. They remained at the same point as the poets—Sannazzaro, Poliziano, Boiardo, Ariosto—whose descriptive episodes are exquisite, but are never allowed to divert attention from the

[1] The picture by Van Eyck above referred to is in the Louvre. Dürer's are engravings. Gentile da Fabriano's sunrise is in the predella of his Adoration of the Magi, in the Florentine Academy. Titian's Marriage of S. Catherine is a good example of his landscape.—National Gallery. For Tintoretto's power over scenery, I would point to the Temptation of Adam, in the Scuola di S. Rocco and in the Accademia at Venice ; to the Murder of Abel, in the Accademia ; the Crucifixion, at S. Cassiano ; the Last Judgment, at the Madonna dell' Orto ; the Temptation of Christ, at S. Rocco. Perugino's and Francia's pictures need not be particularised. With regard to Lionardo, I was thinking of a little chalk drawing in the Queen's library at Windsor. At Parma there are beautiful landscape bits by Correggio.

action and passion of humanity. These remarks might be applied with equal truth to Shakespeare and the rest of the Elizabethan poets.

The importance of Rubens, Claude, the two Poussins, and Salvator Rosa is that they emancipated landscape from its traditional dependence upon human motives, and proved that Nature in herself is worthy of our sympathy and admiration. However critics may be inclined to estimate the value of their work, this at least is incontestable. Rubens fills his canvas with a stretch of rolling country—fields and miry roads and hedges—open to the flying lights and shadows of a breezy morning sky. Claude concentrates his thought upon the luminosity of atmosphere; whatever else he paints, he is always aiming at that. Gaspar Poussin delights in the brown mystery of heavy-foliaged trees with thunder-clouds or sultry heavens above them. Salvator Rosa transports us to the ravines of the Abruzzi, where rocks are splintered and chestnut-boughs hang broken from the giant stems. Clinging still to the tradition that some historical or mythological subject is required to make a picture, these masters introduce Abraham, Odysseus, a sacrifice to Pan, or possibly S. Jerome with his skull, somewhere into their composition. But the relation between the human motive and the landscape is reversed. The former, which had hitherto been all-important, is now subordinated to the latter. The artist's energies are bestowed on working out the scene, the atmospheric luminosity, the open champaign, the massive foliage, and the mighty clouds. The figures are carelessly sketched in, and little heed is paid to emphasizing their action. They are lost, as it were, in the space, diminished by the majesty of nature. Man takes his position as a portion of the world, not as the being for whom the earth and heavens were created. He is drawn upon those broad canvases to scale with trees which overtop him, and with tracts of hill and vale on which he toils a moving speck.

It would be interesting to pursue this subject further. But I am not writing a history of the development of landscape painting. It is my business to deal with ideas rather than with schools of art and pictures. Yet the work of the Dutch masters (independent of Claude and Poussin and Salvator Rosa, contemporaneous in date or somewhat later) cannot be neglected. They contributed even more than these men to the emancipation of art in this direction. They frankly ignored the old tradition of historical motives in landscape. The aspects of the earth and sea and sky, the common occupations of mankind upon the fields and in their dwellings, proved for them sufficient sources of inspiration. Dutch painting filled the seventeenth and a portion of the eighteenth century with powerful production, at a time when the resources of Italy were exhausted. It delivered art from the pedantry of humanism, and anticipated the European revolt against classical canons of perfection. Still, the essentially modern enthusiasm for nature, of which I shall shortly have to speak, was not the guiding light of the Dutch painters. Rarely, if ever, do we detect in them a touch of spirituality, a hint of mystery, an imaginative sense of something underlying nature. This must be sought elsewhere. The first day-break of impassioned naturalism meets us in the work of Norfolk drawing-masters, by the side of English streams and lakes, within sight of Snowdon and Helvellyn. The water-colour painters of our school, at the close of the last century, continued landscape on lines suggested by the Dutch. Their choice of subject was, however, more poetic; their sentiment more delicate; their will to wait on Nature's moods and to interpret her suggestions more evident. Here we perceive the dawning of that sun which climbed the heavens with Turner.

All this while, in literature, classical standards of taste continued to prevail. External nature was treated by the poets of Europe throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries with the condescension proper to polite scholars. The religion of that age was formal. Science went slowly forwards, burrowing like a mole beneath the surface of received ideas, and altering the fundamental relations of thought mainly by the demonstration of astronomical laws. A thoroughgoing change was being gradually prepared in our conception of the universal order. Crude guesses, prefiguring the solid discoveries of geology, the study of primitive society, and the science of comparative biology, jostled with substantial acquisitions of exact knowledge in chemistry and the classification of beasts and vegetables. Man's place in the world was on the point of being apprehended. Nevertheless, the inevitable collision between theology and science —the coming reconstruction of opinion regarding the relation of God to the universe and of mankind to this planet—had as yet been hardly dreamed of. It is true that the elaborate structures of orthodox divinity were on the verge of being rudely shaken. Yet few minds forecast the revolution ; and theologians imagined that they were moving with the current of modern thought when they borrowed a shallow scheme of teleological optimism from what they deigned to notice in the sciences.

III.

The great creation of the Middle Ages, according to M. Renan, was the sentiment of the Infinite. We have further defined this saying by showing how Christianity banished from heaven and earth the antique deities and demi-gods, the girls and boys transmuted into trees and flowers and waterfalls, leaving man alone in a world of which he had no positive knowledge, face to face with a supreme abstraction, God. This God, imagined omniscient and omnipresent, was also imagined as separate from both nature and man. He had brought the universe into existence by his word ; and he could dissolve it in the twinkling of an eye. The Infinite

thus became the sole eventual reality. All else was illusion, mirage, depending on the divine caprice.

But our mind cannot remain satisfied with abstractions. The vacuum created by the demolition of mythological lumber was therefore filled to some extent by another set of polytheistic deities—Christ, Mary, Saints, Martyrs, Angels, Devils. These, however, unlike the deities of paganism, had no relation to nature. So far as the material universe was concerned, that remained empty. The hierarchy of the Church triumphant were moral entities personified—ideals of human love, struggle, patience, faith, purity, and sorrowing experience.

When at last man's affection for his home prevailed over the figments of scholastic theology, humanism attempted to fill up the void of nature, by reintroducing the personalities of classical mythology. These having lost their hold upon the faith of men, were ineffectual—mere *chimæræ bombycinantes in vacuo*, monsters of the fancy spinning cocoons in the abyss of nothing. The Infinite remained a yawning gulf, requiring to be tenanted. With every year, nature became more and more a problem for curiosity, a tantalising complex of facts which had to be accounted for.

The force which was growing while theology declined, and which was destined to control the future, attracted slight attention and roused comparatively feeble jealousy. Bruno indeed suffered martyrdom for attempting to connect God vitally with nature. Galileo was gagged for a different kind of indiscretion. Spinoza, after his harmless life and obscure death, won the reputation of a venomous atheist. Still the reconstructive energy of modern thought moved onwards, acting most effectively where it was least articulate. Theology slighted nature from the outset, and continued to regard the material universe as a field in which the curiosity of man might be allowed to range. She failed to perceive that the Infinite, brought into paramount importance by herself, would

eventually have to be identified with nature. Science, meanwhile, the real and rising force, waxed in obscurity, wisely refraining from hostile contact with waning orthodoxy, until it became a giant which might not be withstood. Like the gourd of Jonah's vision, it grew and overspread the heavens. Silently, imperceptibly, science asserted its right and power to solve the problem of Infinity, and filled the void of nature with a living spirit. God was re-discovered in the universe. That whole, of which man forms a part, appeared the manifestation of Deity.

While this process in the groundwork of thought was unfolding, various causes contributed to the decay of mediæval Christian mythology. The principal of these may be enumerated: first, criticism applied to documents and historical testimony; second, the politico-religious movement of the Reformation; last, but not least, although it seems remote from things of mortal life—the substitution of the sun for the earth as the centre of our sidereal system.

Pagan myths, reintroduced by humanism like a spectral *corps de ballet* on the empty scene of nature, had never been accepted by the modern mind as more than metaphorical. The vacuum, the blank created by the downfall of paganism, the void space out of which issued our sense of Infinity, seemed as though it would become more forlorn and oppressive than ever. Such indeed it was in the Protestant theology of the last century, when any palpitating human heart took heed of it. But science had already begun to occupy this void with a hundred forms of knowledge—with the new astronomy, with chemistry, with electricity, with geology, biology, and the clinching doctrine of the conservation of energy. All tended to the conclusion that infinity and fact, the dual constituents of our environment, form one coherent being of which humanity is an important integer.

The notion of a spirit immanent in Nature, sustaining sun, and stars, and man, and beasts, and trees, was not new. It

had been held by many antique sages. Virgil expressed it in his perfect literary way:[1]

> One Life through all the immense creation runs,
> One Spirit is the moon's, the sea's, the sun's;
> All forms in the air that fly, on the earth that creep,
> And the unknown nameless creatures of the deep—
> Each breathing thing obeys one Mind's control,
> And in all substance is a single soul.

Orphic poets, Stoics, and Neoplatonists uttered the same idea with keener, more mystic ardour. Under the dominance of Christianity this notion had no opportunity of moulding thought. But it reappeared in the dawn of modern science, at the moment when Copernicus revolutionised our theory of the universe. Bruno maintained it with a burning rhetoric, a passion of conviction, and a cogency of demonstration for the imaginative reason, which brought him to the stake. Other philosophers of sundry sects and orders, mystics, deists, professed pantheists, developed it in various ways to suit their several speculations. It was rhymed by Pope in well-turned couplets:

> All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
> Whose body nature is, and God the soul;
> That, changed through all, and yet in all the same,
> Great in the earth as in the ethereal frame,
> Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
> Glows in the stars and blossoms in the trees,
> Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
> Spreads undivided, operates unspent;
> Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
> As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
> As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns,
> As the rapt seraph that adores and burns:
> To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
> He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

In these meditations of the poets and the sages there inhered an element of visionary unsubstantial rapture. Attractive as the speculation may have seemed to minds of a

[1] I borrow Mr. F. W. H. Myers' admirable version from "Essays Classical," p. 173.

certain stamp, it rested on no arguments of probability derived from fact. Theology was justified in neglecting such cloud-castles as the dreams of a disordered mind, until the moment when science, steadily accumulating knowledge without prophesying, had prepared a theory of the universe which necessitated either the abandonment of God as the supreme hypothesis, or else the acceptation of the world as God made manifest in fact, co-extensive with infinity.

It is not needful to pursue this analysis, or to force a conclusion as to the right way of solving the suggested problem. Else I should have to show to what a large extent the idealists of Germany, from Kant to Hegel, by their methods of criticism and *a priori* speculation, stimulated the growing conception of inherent spirituality and unity in nature. For the purpose of this essay it is enough to have pointed out how the modern enthusiasm, which we may call cosmic, sprang up in close connection with ideas like these, and how it is related to the development of science which has given such ideas a foundation of probability. Whether we call ourselves idealists or materialists signifies little. What remains indisputable is that man's interest in the world around him has been enormously developed by the decline of mediæval theology and the progressive expansion of scientific curiosity. That alone constitutes a new sphere of thought for art to work in, pregnant with ideality denied to Greece and Rome, to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. It helps to account for the importance of landscape in the present century, and encourages a belief that there remains a wide scope for it in the future.

Poetry, being the most articulate of the arts, the most susceptive and expressive of pure thought, is the first to indicate the entrance of formative ideas into the æsthetic region. We must therefore interrogate the poets of this century at its commencement, in order to understand the change in our emotional attitude towards nature. For this purpose it will suffice to select Goethe, Wordsworth, and Shelley. When we

compare the fervour of their verses with the colder utterance of Virgil or of Pope, it becomes evident that the venerable conception of Spirit immanent in the Universe has acquired a fuller certainty, a deeper glow, a warmer passion of enthusiasm. This conception now rests on inferences from the discoveries of physical science, and is inflamed with a hope that the cosmos shall be found at length to be an animated organism. It has passed from the realm of philosophical suggestion or rhetorical exposition into the region of religious conviction. Spirit gazing upon nature finds spirit there. The intellect is warmed with the vision of infinity made vital, instead of being refrigerated by a mere mechanical void. At the same time, by comparing the purely descriptive passages of these poets with those of their immediate predecessors—Thomson, Gray, Cowper—we shall discern how this modern metaphysical intuition has given a new touch and tone to art. Writers of the last century regarded nature as outside them, as a group of objects to be observed and catalogued, moralised perhaps, enjoyed, but never with the sense of spiritual affinity. With Wordsworth and the poets of his time, nature owns something correspondent to man's consciousness. A positive mythology, importing the imagination into science—if I may so express this revolution in thought about the universe—replaces the anthropomorphism of the Greeks, and fills at last the vacuum created by mediæval theology.

IV.

Of Goethe's pantheism no better example can be found than the Proëmium to "Gott und Welt." This poem has been already quoted in a previous essay;[1] and for this reason I shall not reproduce my English version of it here, contenting myself with the observation that this sublime hymn is the poetical counterpart of that philosophy which Bruno preached so fervently, and which Spinoza in his colder mood denuded of its religious elements—faith, hope, enthusiasm, inspiration.

[1] At the end of "The Philosophy of Evolution," p. 28.

It expresses in lofty verse what Herbert Spencer has condensed in well-weighed words of prose.

> Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty, that he (man) is ever in presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed.

The scientific philosopher does not qualify that Energy by any other name. The poet calls it God.

From Wordsworth we must not expect the deliberate pantheism of a Bruno or a Goethe. Through whatever processes of thought he passed, this man was at bottom a believing Christian. On that very account his passion for nature, and the deep conviction expressed in his earlier works that the external universe is penetrated by a spirit which also fills the soul of man, have greater value for our present purpose. They prove how instinctively the modern intellect, at the beginning of our century, opened to the cosmic enthusiasm.

Those lines composed above Tintern Abbey, in which Wordsworth describes the two phases of nature-worship he had lived through—the earlier glowing and unreasoned, corresponding to the heat of youthful ardour; the later reflective and religious, persisting through the "years that bring the philosophic mind"—have been so often recited that they dwell in the hearts of every one.

> Nature then
> (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
> And their glad animal movements all gone by)
> To me was all in all—I cannot paint
> What then I was. The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms, were then to me
> An appetite; a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, nor any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
> And all its aching joys are now no more,
> And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
> Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
> Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,

Abundant recompence. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

Thus with Wordsworth the youth's love, simple and sensuous, for the beauty of the world became in manhood a deep mystic insight, piercing behind the veil of nature to the spirit which constitutes both thought and the objects of thought. To God he cries :

Thou, Thou alone
Art everlasting, and the blessed spirits
That Thou includest as the sea her waves !

Yet God, for him, does not include souls only, as the ocean includes the billows on its surface. God also includes nature, and thus the poet can call nature

The nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

It is thus, too, that Lucy drew her beauty, grace, and goodness "by silent sympathy" from woods, and clouds, and stars, and rivulets, and murmuring sounds. Nature being the robe of life woven perpetually by God, becomes at once the oracle and the audience of humanity. Man takes the meadows, woods, and mountains, and "all that we behold from this green earth," into his confidence, feeling that they are kindred to himself. In nature, as in the mind of man, there dwells one spirit, from whom we gather strength, and who sustains our aspiration. This is the meaning of that apparent paradox :

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

But, quitting this region of high speculation, let us see how Wordsworth's mysticism gave tone to his descriptions of landscape. I will select the poem on the Simplon Pass, than which nothing nobler in blank verse has been written during this century.

Brook and road
Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy Pass,
And with them did we journey several hours
At a slow step. The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And in the narrow rent, at every turn,
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

For the sake of comparison, here are two passages from Gray's letters, one describing the ascent to the Grande Chartreuse, the other the descent of the Mont Cenis:

It is six miles to the top; the road runs winding up it, commonly not six feet broad; on one hand is the rock, with woods of pine trees hanging overhead; on the other a monstrous precipice, almost perpendicular, at the bottom of which rolls a torrent, that sometimes tumbling among the fragments of stone that have fallen from on high, and sometimes precipitating itself down vast descents with a noise like thunder, which is still made greater by the echo from the mountains on each side, concurs to form one of the most solemn, the most romantic, and the most astonishing scenes I ever beheld. Add to this the strange views made by the crags and cliffs on the other hand; the cascades that in many places throw themselves from the very summit down into the vale, and the river

below; and many other particulars impossible to describe; you will conclude we had no occasion to repent our pains.

It was six miles to the top, where a plain opens itself about as many more in breadth, covered perpetually with very deep snow, and in the midst of that a great lake of unfathomable depth, from whence a river takes its rise, and tumbles over monstrous rocks quite down the other side of the mountain. The descent is six miles more, but infinitely more steep than the going up; and here the men perfectly fly down with you, stepping from stone to stone with incredible swiftness in places where none but they could go three paces without falling. The immensity of the precipices, the roaring of the river and torrents that run into it, the huge crags covered with ice and snow, and the clouds below you and about you, are objects it is impossible to conceive without seeing them; and though we had heard many strange descriptions of the scene, none of them at all came up to it.

Sixty years had elapsed between these descriptions by Gray and the lines on the Simplon Pass by Wordsworth. What a change there is in the way of feeling nature! It may be objected that I am comparing prose with poetry. But Gray's Latin verses on the Grande Chartreuse and the touch on nature in his English poems at large have the same quality of appreciative observation from a point external to the object, whereas Wordsworth's lines are distinguished by sympathy with things that speak intelligibly to his soul because they form a part of that in which he lives and moves and has his being. The *præsens deus* of Wordsworth—*quis deus incertum, tamen est deus*—finds no place in Gray's philosophy.

Shelley's poetry, more than any other in our language, is imbued with a mystical Platonism, which displays itself, so far as our present subject is concerned, under a twofold aspect. In nature Shelley seems to have divined an omnipresent, all-sustaining, vitalising spirit, which assumed for his imagination the specific attributes of intellectual or ideal beauty. In Alastor he describes the fate of one who is for ever haunted by this beauty, burning dimly through things of sense, and eluding the neophyte in every appearance which takes form and fascination from the immanent splendour. In vain Alastor pursues his vision across the world: in vain the

fairest creatures and sublimest scenes are offered to his gaze: it is only in sleep that his soul is comforted by the divine intuition; and he dies unsatisfied, to blend with that which lured him through far lands disconsolate.

> He, I ween,
> Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
> Actæon-like, and fled affrighted.

This is one side to Shelley's Platonism. But not the less is there a Spirit of Life, an *anima mundi*, the power and vital heat of which is felt in thunder and the voice of birds, in the choral dances of the planets, in herbs and stones, in stars and exhalations and the soul of man. This life of the world has for one of its main manifestations the ideal beauty which led Alastor captive. The supreme expression of the world-soul, conceived as beauty, intangible, elusive, unapproachable, is given in that song which a voice in the air sings to Asia:[1]

> Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
> With their love the breath between them;
> And thy smiles before they dwindle
> Make the cold air fire; then screen them
> In those looks, where whoso gazes
> Faints, entangled in their mazes.
>
> Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
> Through the vest which seems to hide them;
> As the radiant lines of morning
> Through the clouds ere they divide them;
> And this atmosphere divinest
> Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.
>
> Fair are others; none beholds thee,
> But thy voice sounds low and tender
> Like the fairest, for it folds thee
> From the sight, that liquid splendour,
> And all feel, yet see thee never,
> As I feel now, lost for ever!
>
> Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
> Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,

[1] *Prometheus Unbound*, Act ii., Scene 5.

And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with brightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

The relation of man's soul to the world-soul, conceived by the poet as Life, Light, Love, and Beauty, is defined with more than usual precision in the following stanza from "Adonais." Keats has died:

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely; he doth bear
His part, while the one spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing the unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees, and beasts, and men, into the heaven's light.

It is apparent that, for Shelley, the beauty which hunted Alastor to his death on this earth, the beauty which in the mind of Asia was as a keen flame shining through the alabaster of the universe, has become the attribute of power, vitality, continuous and all-pervasive energy. This is not poetry borrowing the forms of pantheistic speculation, but pantheism assuming to itself the faith and passion which transmutes speculative thought into religion. To this underlying intuition of indwelling deity Shelley owes the magic of his verse, whenever he deals directly with nature. Those aërial conceptions of living creatures in the elements, the ministry of the cloud, the wizardry of the west wind, the sympathies of the sensitive plant, the incantations of the Witch of Atlas, the raptures of the loves of earth and moon, the dæmon of the whirlwind, the chariot-races of the hours, the primeval genii of *Prometheus Unbound*—all these creations of the poet's mythopœic fancy are vitally connected with the poet's belief in the universe as a manifestation of spiritual force. For him it is not that subordinate divinities —fairies, angels, fiends, nymphs, fauns, and so forth—exist separately everywhere upon a slightly different plane from

that of human nature; but everywhere, and in all things, in plants and beasts and men and earth and sky, eternally abides a genius and a spirit, whose particular epiphanies constitute one moving whole, a stream of life, a ῥόος as the Greek sage called it. "All things pass, and nothing stays; the cosmos may be compared to the flow of a river, into which it is impossible to plunge twice and find it the same flood." Yes: but the stream, though ever changing, is perennially one; and all things, including man, are drops which go to make its continuity.

V.

If we were aiming at completeness, now would be the time to analyse the feeling for nature expressed by other poets of this century: in England by Byron, Scott, Coleridge, Keats; by Tennyson, Rossetti, Swinburne, Arnold, Roden Noel, Browning, Morris. This is not necessary. The result would hardly repay us for the tedium of the process. It will suffice to bear in mind that, during the nineteenth century, a special sensitiveness to landscape, varying in kind according to the temperament of each individual, has been the note of all our poets—good, bad, and indifferent. The exaltation of enthusiasm which distinguishes Goethe, Wordsworth, Shelley, appears rarely in their contemporaries and successors. Only perhaps in Roden Noel does the cult of nature rise to the fervour-point of philosophical and religious inspiration. Many critics will maintain that the poet is the better artist when he does not philosophise his emotions; that Scott and Keats stand on a superior ground as landscape-painters to Shelley and Wordsworth. Yet, however this point may be settled, no one will deny the fact that literature in our age is penetrated through and through with a sympathy for nature which we do not find in the work of the last century, and which culminates in the poetry of Wordsworth, Shelley, Roden Noel.

To what extent painting has been directly influenced by

this enthusiasm admits of much debate. It cannot, however, be doubted that the curiosity from which science sprang, and which so powerfully stimulated our poets, affected painting and controlled its practice. Artists, though they may not be self-conscious with regard to the main currents of contemporary thought, are subject to its stress. They enjoy one privilege denied to men of letters. Their vehicle of expression excludes reasoning; it offers them no inducement to formulate vague longings and emotions which escape too easily through language. Having to solve problems of composition, to study the forms of objects in their physical presentment, to grapple with technical difficulties of execution, they dally not with metaphysic. Deeply as these men enjoy the beauties of the world around us, subtly and profoundly as they comprehend them—with a far finer touch upon their quality than those who have not sought to translate them into pictures—it is their duty and their pleasure to reproduce aspects, not to penetrate mysteries. From the passion which takes hold of poets and of mystics they are freed by the conditions of their art, albeit they too may be mystics and poets in the esoteric chambers of their soul.

The landscape-painter stands in the same relation to nature as the sculptor to the nude. Praxiteles, modelling a Venus, runs less risk of personal disturbance than the poet, lover of beauty, shut up for hours together with a living woman in a studio.

If this be the case, the founders of the modern schools of landscape might repudiate the suggestion that their work is in any way connected with the philosophical ideas which I have analysed. Nevertheless, they were children of their age, and obeyed its leading impulse. Art requires a spiritual element to move in, and responds with elasticity to the conditions of the faith men live by. So we may still regard landscape-painting as a species vitally related to science, and to religious mysticism modified by science.

The ideality of any art depends, as I have previously attempted to demonstrate, upon the thoughts common to the artist and his audience, which the former seeks to express. Sculpture was congenial to the anthropomorphic mythology of Hellas. Painting was congenial to the more emotional mythology of mediæval Christendom. These two arts drew abundant ideality from these two spheres of thought. But when a new religious sense arose in Europe—when theistic conceptions, especially among the northern races, lost that sensuous concreteness which is adapted to æsthetical presentment—then it was found that the capacities of painting were by no means exhausted. The same art, obeying the thought-stress of the moving age, lent its powers to the nascent enthusiasm for nature. Pictures of saints and martyrs were succeeded by pictures of the world we live in. Painting ceased to be the handmaid of the Church, because the Church was losing hold upon the intellect. She became in turn the friend and teacher of generations for whom the earth was growing daily more divine. Now, in the work of the landscape-painters, spirit still speaks to spirit; the spirit of the artist who perceives, interprets, and preserves the beauty of earth, sea, and sky, to the spirit of men ready to receive it. What we owe to these hierophants of nature is incalculable. They are continually training our eyes to see, our minds to understand the world. They show how sympathy, emotion, passion, thought may be associated with inanimate things—for a masterpiece of landscape-painting, like a symphony in music, is penetrated with the maker's thought and feeling. Having passed through the artist's intellect, the scene becomes transfigured into a symbol of what the artist felt. His subjectivity inheres in it for ever after.

So vast is the field of nature, so comparatively little of that field has as yet been subdued, that the resources of art to be derived therefrom seem inexhaustible. Nor have we any reason to apprehend that the religion of the future will fail to supply this branch of art with ideality.

NATURE MYTHS AND ALLEGORIES.

I.

SOME who read these lines will perhaps remember that enchanted region of Val Bregaglia, where the forest stretches downward from Soglio to Castasegna, through several miles of majesty and loveliness: the long aisles of secular chestnut-trees interlacing their branches overhead, the golden weight of foliage and fruit upon the boughs, the firm short sward and yielding moss around gray venerable stems, the sun and shadow falling on lilac crocuses and russet drift of scattered leaves; and, above all, the sculptured cliffs of Monte Zocco, with Bondasca's snaky glaciers uplifted in the luminous expanse of azure air, which separates those sphinxes of the Alps from our verdurous haunt among the clustering trees.

In such a place, earth, the ancient mother, seems to enfold man with loving-kindness and a soothing tenderness of beauty. Yet those splintered mountains, older far than man or forest, the frozen rivers and the waste of stones descending from their girdle, the deep untroubled blue to which they rear their javelin points of cloven granite, the limitless and living atmosphere which softens them and makes the vision to our eyes endurable—all these things remind us of the unity in nature, whereby in some mysterious manner our tranquil pleasure in the woodland is linked with primeval forces—far away and unapproachable, yet ever near and active in our being—with the universal power that brought us into life, with cosmic tumult and with order, with interstellar serenity and gloom, with the everlasting clasp of God, who holds mankind

and mountains in the hollow of His hand and binds the fabric of the world together in one vital whole.

Here I wandered one September morning; and, as it chanced, a reprint of Blake's "Marriage of Heaven and Hell" was in my pocket. Wishful to enjoy the scene and temper my delight with meditation, I flung myself upon the grass beneath an overshadowing tree, and read the sentences which follow:

If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things through narrow chinks of his cavern.

How do you know but every Bird that cuts the airy way,
Is an immense world of delight, closed by your senses five?

One thought fills immensity.

What is now proved was once only imagined.

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged and numerous senses could perceive.

As I read, there happened to me something like that which happened to Petrarch upon the summit of Mont Ventoux.[1]

Blake's sentences, pregnant with mysticism, struck a deep chord and chimed with thoughts which were already stirring in me. For a while, I entered into spiritual union with nature, and felt as though the genii of those giant chestnut-trees might pace across the sward, or Pan appear, and saw that everything is infinite, and knew the thought which fills immensity, and hailed "a world of delight" in the hawk which hovered in the azure depth of air above the glaciers of Bondasca.

Such moments do not last long, but they leave impressions which contain the germs of future speculation. And so I have written this account of a September morning in the woods of Castasegna in order to introduce some reflections upon the

[1] See above, p. 210.

value, real or metaphorical, which mythology still possesses in an age of scientific thought.

II.

Minute attention has been paid to the origins of myths and sagas; but we have lost sight of their enduring symbolical importance. Those ancient stories which our remote forefathers held to be the sum and abstract of world-wisdom, have been submitted to solar, meteorological, linguistic explanations. Learned and ingenious scholars have resolved them into tales about the sun and stars, the storms and clouds, and also into a disease of language. These methods, carried to extravagance, provoked a reaction of common sense, and another school of students are now seeking less mechanical solutions of the problem, by treating myths as relics of prehistoric culture, custom, and religion.

Few have the temerity to regard mythology as a necessary moment in human thought, the significance of which is by no means exhausted. At a distant period, myths were certainly ways of explaining the spiritual essence of the world and man to the imagination. That essence must, except in symbol and parable, remain for ever inscrutable and incognisable for the human mind. It is therefore by no means proved that the intuitions embodied in the myths of races like the Greek are even now devoid of actuality.

Nature myths assume an indwelling spirit in the universe, and express the sense of it by ascribing personality to inorganic things and vegetables. Allegory myths attribute independent existence to the moral and intellectual qualities of human beings. In the antique polytheistic systems, notably in the Hellenic, these two kinds were never wholly distinguished; for, when a natural object comes to be personified, the being thus evolved assumes the properties of humanity. Furthermore, all polytheisms known to us are composite of still more ancient creeds, combining divers

elements of nature-worship and moral allegory in heterogeneous admixture. Still, for the purpose of analysis, the two species may be isolated, especially as we can no longer treat of either from the purely religious point of view. The utmost we can do is to raise the question whether the myths of antiquity do not still supply a suggestive way of regarding the universe as a spiritual whole, and man in his relation to it as a part thereof.

III.

Were they wholly fanciful, those myths and allegories of the earliest philosophers and poets? The seers who gave them form lived closer to all-nourishing earth than we do, pent as we are in populous cities and clouded with the culture of four thousand years. Perhaps they hold an element of truth conveyed in symbol, to the significance of which we have been blinded by theological exclusiveness, and by the positive preoccupations of the scientific genius. Their truth, if truth they had, lay in their recognition of the universe as one live thing, and their belief in larger moral forces than those of individual men and women.

We cannot return to the state of thought about the world, out of which the primitive myths sprang. The habit of attributing a personality like that of a man to everything in nature belongs to the far distant past, and will not be revived. But in its place the modern theory of the universe tends to establish the conviction that men and beasts and plants and inorganic substances are parts of one mind-penetrated unity. That abrupt separation of men from their environment, which formed the leading principle of philosophy and religion during the last two thousand years, begins to disappear. We recognise it as a necessary stage of thought, in the passage from grosser to more refined conceptions of the spirit which sustains and animates the hierarchy of being. We can no longer deny our kinship with the lower lives wherefrom we issued.

It is interesting to notice how the intuitions of early thinkers tally with the last results of modern science. A poet writing in the mystic East, six centuries ago, described the ascent of man from nature in these verses : [1]

> First man appeared in the class of inorganic things
> Next he passed therefrom into that of plants.
> For years he lived as one of the plants,
> Remembering nought of his inorganic state so different ;
> And when he passed from the vegetive to the animal state,
> He had no remembrance of his life as a plant,
> Except the inclination he felt to the world of plants,
> Especially at the time of spring and sweet flowers ;
> Like the inclination of infants toward their mothers,
> Which know not the cause of their inclination to the breast.
> Again, the great Creator, as you know,
> Drew man out of the animal into the human state.
> Thus man passed from one order of nature to another,
> Till he became wise and knowing and strong as he is now.
> Of his first souls he has now no remembrance,
> And he will be again changed from his present soul.

Jalâl Ad Dîn conceived evolution in a different way from ours. But he arrived at the clear and logical conclusion that man, having emerged from elements and plants and animals, retains a sympathy with them, loves and admires and uses them because they are the stock from which he sprang.

IV.

Unless we reject what is implied in the evolutionary theory of the Origin of Man, we are forced to concede that the old Hellenic religion—a religion which has survived in all imaginative minds—contained a truth neglected and down-trodden by Christian theology. It rested on the following propositions. Not only man, but all things in the world, are full of soul. Soul can communicate with soul, not only in its human form, but also in nature ; man's soul with the soul of forces that control his life, and with the soul of dimly sentient things beneath him in the scale of being. Our contemplation

[1] From the "Musnari" of Jalâl Ad Dîn.

of the external universe is therefore not the mere inspection of matter alien to ourselves, but a communion with that from which we came and into which we go, itself penetrated with the thought that constitutes our essence. Only, in the rhythm of the universal life, it would appear that the creatures of each stage, while in that stage, cannot overleap the barriers of their defined personality, cannot mingle freely by sympathy and understanding with the creatures of another stage. Man, so long as he is man, has his most distinct affinities to man alone, and is forced to think of spirit as human. This does not, however, prevent him from entering into a sub-conscious intercourse with beings which are not human, and from recognising their essential spirituality. But when he does this in faith and earnestness, he represents his sense of their kinship with himself in terms of his own existence. To put it otherwise, he feigns men and women in the objects of the outer world—the trees, the flowers, the stars, the rivers, and the mountains. Their participation in the divine life, of which he too is part, inevitably is expressed as personality, because he knows himself to be a person. He cannot even escape from thinking of God, or the spirit of the whole, as a person. This may or may not correspond to the fact; for what personality is, we cannot define. It is only a term for denoting the conditions under which alone consciousness is known to us at present. And we are compelled, being what we call persons, recognising personality as the *sine quâ non* of our conscious life, to find personality in natural things whenever we confess their common essence with ourselves.

Thus, then, we obtain a theory for the validity of ancient nature myths. The truth that they contained was the perception of spirituality in the material world; and though the crude imagery (zoomorphic and anthropomorphic) in which that truth was veiled may deprive them now of all but a symbolical value, yet they claim reverent consideration in an age which has to reappropriate their underlying principle.

Dryads, oreads, fauns, nymphs of wave and fountain, satyrs and Pan, Narcissus, Hyacinth, and Clytia, are but forms found for uttering man's sense of his affinity to woods and flowers and waters. When the Greek boy saw the hamadryad stepping from her oak upon the anemone-starred sward around it, he did not wholly indulge a vision or yield to an hallucination The oak-tree has a life, a soul, a particle of the divine *aura*, and with the recognition of this fact a nymph starts from the graceful stem to greet the soul of child-like man. When the Thessalian shepherd climbed at eve the crags of Œta, because he thought that Hesperus was calling to him for his love, he did not wholly dream: for who has not known the persuasions of the evening star, and dimly felt his heart drawn forth to it with longing? We cannot behold hamadryads hurrying across the lawn, or astral gods leaning to us from the saffron-tinted mountain crests. That way of feeling the spirituality of nature and of expressing our sense of affinity with natural things is perhaps for ever closed. It is indeed probable that both hamadryad and ethereal Hesperus were never seen except in reverie or pious act of faith by Greeks. Yet surely our intellectual life will be richer, and our intuition into the world will be truer, when we yield once more to the belief upon which those myths were founded, when we cease from standing aloof from nature and repelling the constant spiritual intimations she is giving us.

V.

Thus far I have been dealing with nature myths. For those myths which may properly be called allegories, a similar method of analysis can be adopted. But here the subject-matter itself is different, and the inquiry will lead to other considerations regarding the validity of ancient fables. I shall seek to give some reasons why we should not so lightly reject, as we are wont to do, those personified abstractions which men of former ages drew from the substance of their souls and called realities.

The essence of allegory consists in extracting some marked portion of our psychology from its environment, and presenting it alone for contemplation. We think of wisdom solely, or strength solely, or physical beauty solely; but having thought of these qualities in isolation, we are at once compelled to clothe them with bodies and regard them as persons. Human thought labours here under the same necessity as when it expresses our sense of affinity with nature in the forms of myth. When this step has been taken, the personage brought into ideal being cannot be merely wise, or merely strong, or merely beautiful. Together with personality, it has put on the multiplicity of human attributes. Therefore we obtain the complex deities called Pallas, Herakles, and Aphrodite. The main abstraction to which they owe existence persists in them, and dominates their doings; but in the legends told about them other moral elements appear. The fables of Pallas, Herakles, and Aphrodite teach how humanity on a colossal scale, swayed severally by laws of wisdom, strength, and beauty, will behave under conditions similar to those of our experience—what their vigour and their frailty are, to what temptations they are subject, what special advantages they enjoy, and what distinctive functions they perform. Studying these moral qualities abstracted and incarnate in the allegory or the god, man learns to comprehend their influences clearly, to recognise his own proclivities and addictions with precision, to submit to those which attract him, to shrink from those which repel.

There is an ideal truth in allegory of this kind; and the physical types which artists and poets have created to express it are not fortuitous. We have, indeed, never seen a person wholly wise, or wholly strong, or wholly beautiful. Yet the thoughts of wisdom, strength, and beauty are present to us; and if these could take shape as human persons, they would find a body corresponding to their spiritual essence.

To return to the paganism which worshipped these abstractions as deities would be impossible, and if it were possible it

would be undesirable. Until proof be gained of intermediate gods, of angels and devils, of planetary powers and genii, we do not need to hold the creations of our mind in superstitious awe. Yet surely our moral life would be richer, our sense of spiritual potencies would be more vivid, if we were in the habit of inculcating lessons of conduct and discriminating the several types to which we may assimilate ourselves, by some such striking examples as polytheism held up for imitation and avoidance. The devotion of Hippolytus to Artemis was not a vain thing; nor was the need Orestes felt for purification before his mother's Furies an idle fancy. To answer that Artemis and the Furies were but the figments of antique sages and poets avails little, for who shall contend that the real people of Herodotus's history are more substantially present to him than the fictitious people in Shakespeare's plays? So long as you can touch a man and hear him speak, he differs indeed from the hero of an epic; but the memory of a man preserved in record differs little from the figment of a man in living poetry. It may even be contended that King Arthur of the story-books has exerted more solid influence than ever did King Arthur in the flesh, and that Hamlet is more philosophically effective than Democritus or Heraclitus. In fact, it is impossible to preserve that hard and fast line which the understanding is apt to draw between the personages of actual existence and the personages of poetry, allegory, and fable. Only as ideals, as typifying a spiritual quality which endures and works for ever in the world of men, have either any true importance. This is why some German critics sought to prove that had Christ been but a myth, mankind would not have been the poorer.

There is another point of view from which one might defend the allegories contained in antique polytheistic religions. Their ideal veracity consists in this, that the spiritual qualities of humanity do not manifest themselves in individuals alone, but in races, classes, congeries of men. The

race, the class, the community include and determine individuals in no less true a sense than that in which individuals compose and constitute those larger aggregations. It is therefore not only permissible but right and proper to regard the broader species of spiritual qualities as abiding potencies, external to the individual, claiming his homage or abhorrence —in other words, as the lords to which he is addicted, or the tyrants against which he struggles. Lust dwells in this man's heart ; but lust, in a far more formidable shape, is abroad in a huge city. Are we logically justified in refusing actual existence to the holiness which conserved Israel, or to the lechery which ruined Corinth ? We need not be afraid lest we should sap the roots of monotheism by attributing reality to the collective vices and virtues of our common humanity. We recognise the reality of vice and virtue in the individual ; why not therefore on a larger scale in the species and the genus ? Catholic Christianity has remained monotheistic. Yet it allows a hierarchy of angels, a hierarchy of devils, and a whole multitude of saints, each one of whom personifies and symbolises some specific form of moral excellence. I am not contending, as I have already intimated, for the restitution of polytheism in its cruder forms, for the belief in angels, saints, and devils. I wish only to remind the present generation that, just as the makers of nature myths had a clearer intuition into the spirituality of the universe than we have now, so the makers of allegorical myths had a more vivid sense than we have of the spiritual potencies which surround us in the collective moral atmosphere of humanity at large.

The chief defects of allegory in mediæval and modern times are due to the want of real belief in it by those who make it. Neither Christianity nor science will suffer us to accept the pagan point of view here any more than in the case of nature myths. Instead, therefore, of forming an essential part of religion, allegory is confined to poetry and plastic art, where it has hitherto lacked substantiality and conviction. The

modern poet and the artist, though they treat of temperance or sloth as personalities, imagine that they are but using figures. They do not therefore put either their heart or their faith into their creation. Yet if we could but come to think of lust and anger, chastity and temperance, remorse and revenge, forgiveness and repentance, not as mere abstractions from ourselves, but as powers external to our soul, endowed with penetrative force to influence our lives, this would render the inner drama of the moral consciousness more real and poignant. To do so with absolute belief in these ideas as agencies independent of ourselves is perhaps impossible; just as it is impossible to believe again in nymphs and fauns. Polytheism cannot be resuscitated, and a recurrence to demonolatry would imply the abdication of the reason. Still, in those points where art and poetry touch ethics, it would be of benefit to humane culture if we could resume the habit of contemplating the broader species of our spiritual qualities in forms of personality adapted to their several essences. Possibly the sculpture and the painting and the verse of the future may yet produce monumental embodiments of vices and of virtues, through familiarity with which posterity will sensibly learn how awful in ugliness are the one kind, how awful in beauty are the other. What right, moreover, have we, after all is said and done, to deny that each collective vice and each collective virtue of humanity may be a spiritual entity—a something corresponding to demonic or angelic essences? It is difficult to see that any harm should come to us, even though we submitted to regard them as living potencies influencing mankind.

VI.

Such speculations border the abyss of mysticism, and require a more minute development than I can give them here. It will be well in conclusion to recapitulate the points

wherein nature myths and allegory myths differ, and the points they have in common.

The nature myth extracts spirit from the external world, and invests that spirit with human personality in forms appropriate to the impression made upon the human mind by each particular object. The allegorical myth abstracts from the human soul specific qualities, contemplates these as objects, and while doing so is forced to provide them with physical embodiments and personalities corresponding to their spiritual essence. Man, so long as he is man, cannot think a person except as both body and spirit. He cannot idealise his own spiritual properties except as embodied. He cannot detach the spirit he feels in tree or flower except as embodied. His reason may assure him that this is a delusion. Both Christianity and science may warn him off that path of so-called falsehood. Christianity, indeed, by its lore of angels and devils, has accepted the principle of allegorical myths, while it rejects the nature myths as pagan. Science bids us cast both aside, and in so far is more logical. Where Christianity and science agree in condemning nature myths, they do so at the expense of making man deaf and blind to the inherent spirituality of the universe. All through the Middle Ages the best thinkers remained in the grossest ignorance and darkness with regard to nature on account of the false attitude forced upon them by theology. In modern times materialism, which is perhaps the hollowest and shabbiest *idolum specûs* which has ever haunted the cavern of man's intellect, owes its arrogance to a similar false attitude assumed by physics. Yet dogmatic theology is losing its rigid grasp upon the mind and heart of man, while science is leading us back by circuitous routes to the primitive belief in a life-penetrated universe. This being the case, we can indulge the expectation that though the Hellenic point of view with respect to myths of nature and of allegory may never be resumed, yet we shall be able better in the future to appre-

ciate their value. Both poetry and art may be destined, on a far more elevated platform and with far profounder assurance of the truth, to use them both again for the illumination and instruction of mankind.

VII.

The arts are not bound to occupy themselves exclusively with subjects of the present epoch. It is true that they are exhorted to do so by critics who profess themselves indignant with "the idle singer of an empty day." Such critics, however, have forgotten the treasures of old-world speculation, the jewels of experience collected by our ancestors in times when life was simpler, the types of ever-recurring tragedy and ever-fresh emotion which lie embedded in primeval myths and allegories. View them as we may, the thoughts of bygone races, of men who laid the foundations of knowledge, who first used language with a conscious purpose, who were closer to the origins of life than we are, deserve reverent study by all thinkers who accept man's emergence from the common stuff of nature. They possess not merely an antiquarian or an historic interest. They have something to say to us, which we run the risk of ignoring in this positive age.

It is not in the cruder myths of savage tribes that modern art can seek material for profitable treatment. These are too remote from our sympathies, although we recognise their value as the first stage in the development of human thought. We must not reject them as alien to ourselves, or abhor them for their absurdities and indecencies. On the contrary, it is our duty to use them as the keys to those nobler forms of faith, which sprang up with the growth of the progressive races.

The secondary stages of mythology, when it has become the vehicle of thoughts and feelings essentially akin to ours, without losing its elder sense of the divinity in nature, are those which still abound in artistic motives of the highest

beauty. Erudition enables us to approach the repositories of Oriental, Scandinavian, Egyptian, Semitic, Hellenic wisdom with intelligent insight. Yet we stand far enough aloof from them to be dominated by no religious preoccupations, and no local or national predilections. By the aid of criticism we can divest the legends of the world's young prime of their archaic trappings, and can discern what they preserve of permanent truth and durable instruction. Taste and sympathy reveal the large and simple grandeur of their outlines, the depth and universality of their emotion.

Examining a tale of Greek or Norse mythology, say the story of Perseus or that of Balder, is like opening a sealed jar of precious wine. Its fragrance spreads abroad through all the palace of the soul; and the noble vintage, upon being tasted, courses through blood and brain with the matured elixir of stored-up summers.

Goethe says that he was wont to carry the subjects of his poems many years unspoken in his mind. By this means they became a portion of himself, secretly drawing nourishment from all that he experienced and learned upon the paths of life. When the time came to give them utterance and form, it was found that they suggested more than at the first glance met the ear and eye. They had acquired a many-sidedness, a vitality, a power of varied application, from their lengthy sojourn in secluded chambers of his consciousness. Myths have the same incommensurable and inexhaustible potency. Having slumbered for generations in the thought of mighty races, when they sprang to light in their due season, they were endowed with virtues far beyond their seeming. Pregnancy is the note of a true myth. The stuff of man's self has been absorbed and wrought into its substance by a process so analogous to growth, that the more we seek to fathom it the more we find there. The very quaintness of each detail is suggestive, capable of divers applications, fit for varied uses. The wisdom it presents in symbolic shape has been so worn

into harmony with human needs and human experience, that it cannot lose its value till the end of time.

Our artists, whether poets, painters, or musicians, are therefore right to employ the legends of past ages for the expression of thoughts and emotions belonging to the present. If used with true imaginative insight, there is no cause to fear lest the strain of modern adaptation should destroy the mystic beauty of the antique form. Myths, by reason of their symbolic pregnancy and spontaneity of origin, are everlastingly elastic. Thus Goethe found nothing fitter to his purpose than the Faust legend, when he planned the drama of the nineteenth century. Shelley poured his spirit of revolt and aspiration into the legend of Prometheus. Wagner, wishing to create a new musical drama, extracted material from the story of Tannhäuser, from Norse mythology, and from episodes of the Arthurian cycle. William Morris combined the mystic tales of many nations in his "Earthly Paradise." Tennyson rehandled the substance of Malory's "Morte d'Arthur." Landor touched the height of poetry in the tale of "Rhaicos," which transports us to a time when man might love a Hamadryad. In the poem of Agamemnon's meeting with Iphigeneia, he interpreted for modern minds the sublime pathos of the allegory of Lethe. In each and all of these instances, and in many more which might be mentioned, the poet's instinct was a sound one.

For plastic art, myths and allegories are of even higher value than for poetry. This is because they embody permanent ideas in sensuous form. They are therefore, by their very essence, exactly of the quality which figurative art demands. I need, at the present moment, only point to the use which two of our greatest English painters, Mr. Watts and Mr. Burne Jones, have made of this material. I think it will be admitted that if we look for ideality in contemporary English painting, we shall find this mainly in the work of these two masters. And it is in the region of the myth and

allegory that both have brought their poetic qualities conspicuously to view. Mr. Burne Jones, in particular, has proved that it is possible to treat legends so familiar as that of Perseus or the Sleeping Beauty, allegories so old as that of the Days of Creation, mythical tales so trite as that of Pan and Syrinx, with freshness and originality, evolving from their kernel something which is vitally in sympathy with modern thought.

VIII.

The line of thought which I have followed in this essay would have appeared preposterous and paradoxical a century ago, when mythology was treated from the point of view of Lemprière, and when the artistic handling of allegorical themes proceeded upon imitation of Græco-Roman or late Renaissance work. It will probably find but scanty acceptance even now. Yet there are present conditions favourable to its reception by tolerant minds, which were lacking in the immediate past. The revolution effected by the romantic movement has delivered us from pseudo-classicism. At the same time spirituality has been restored to the material universe by science, which forces us to regard the cosmos as a single whole, penetrated throughout with life-producing energy.

IS POETRY AT BOTTOM A CRITICISM OF LIFE?

A REVIEW OF MATTHEW ARNOLD'S SELECTION FROM WORDSWORTH.[1]

It is both interesting and instructive to hear what masters of a craft may choose to say upon the subject of their art. The interest is rather increased than diminished by the limitation or the imperfection of their view, inseparable from personal inclination, idiosyncrasy of genius, or absorbing previous course of study. When Herrick exclaims, "There's no lust like to poetry;" when Goethe asserts, "Die Kunst ist nur Gestaltung;" when Shelley writes, "Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds," we feel in each of these utterances—too partial to express a universal truth, too profound to be regarded as a merely casual remark—the dominating bias and instinctive leanings of a lifetime. If, then, we remember that Mr. Matthew Arnold is equally eminent as a critic and a poet, we shall not be too much surprised to read the following account of poetry given in the preface to his selection from Wordsworth:

> It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life—to the question: How to live.

At first sight this definition will strike most people as a paradox. It would be scarcely less startling to hear, as

[1] "Poems of Wordsworth." Chosen and Edited by Matthew Arnold. Golden Treasury Series. Macmillan, 1879.

indeed we might perhaps hear from a new school of writers upon art, that "Criticism is at bottom the poetry of things," inasmuch as it is the critic's function to select the quintessential element of all he touches, and to present that only in choice form to the public he professes to instruct. Yet, when we return to Mr. Arnold, and compare the passage above quoted with the fuller expression of the same view upon a preceding page, the apparent paradox is reduced to the proportions of a sound and valuable generalisation:

> Long ago, in speaking of Homer, I said that the noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. I said that a great poet receives his distinctive character of superiority from his application, under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth, from his application, I say, whatever it may be, of the ideas—
>
> On man, on nature, and on human life,
>
> which he has acquired for himself.

A vital element in this description of poetic greatness is the further determination of the ideas in question as moral:

> It is said that to call these ideas *moral* ideas is to introduce a strong and injurious limitation. I answer that it is to do nothing of the kind, because moral ideas are really so main a part of human life. The question, *how to live*, is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests every man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied.

With the substance of these passages there are few who, after mature reflection on the nature of poetry, will not agree. That the weight of Mr. Arnold's authority should be unhesitatingly given against what he calls the poetry of revolt and the poetry of indifference to morals, is a matter for rejoicing to all who think the dissemination of sound views on literature important. It is good to be reminded at the present moment that Omar Khayyam failed of true greatness because he was a reactionary, and that Théophile Gautier took up his abode in what can never be more than a wayside halting-place. From time

to time critics arise who attempt to persuade us that it does not so much matter what a poet says as how he says it, and that the highest poetical achievements are those which combine a certain vagueness of meaning with sensuous melody and colour of verbal composition. Yet, if one thing is proved with certainty by the whole history of literature down to our own time, it is that the self-preservative instinct of humanity rejects such art as does not contribute to its intellectual nutrition and moral sustenance. It cannot afford to continue long in contact with ideas that run counter to the principles of its own progress. It cannot bestow more than passing notice upon trifles, however exquisitely finished. Poetry will not, indeed, live without style or its equivalent. But style alone will never confer enduring and cosmopolitan fame upon a poet. He must have placed himself in accord with the permanent emotions, the conservative forces of the race; he must have uttered what contributes to the building up of vital structure in the social organism, in order to gain more than a temporary or a partial hearing. Though style is an indispensable condition of success in poetry, it is by matter, and not by form, that a poet has to take his final rank.

Of the two less perfect kinds of poetry, the poetry of revolt and the poetry of indifference, the latter has by far the slighter chance of survival. Powerful negation implies that which it rebels against. The energy of the rebellious spirit is itself a kind of moral greatness. We are braced and hardened by contact with impassioned revolutionaries, with Lucretius, Voltaire, Leopardi. Something necessary to the onward progress of mankind—the vigour of antagonism, the operative force of the antithesis—is communicated by them. They are in a high sense ethical by the exhibition of hardihood, self-reliance, hatred of hypocrisy. Even Omar's secession from the mosque to the tavern symbolises a necessary and recurring moment of experience. It is, moreover, dignified by the pathos of the poet's view of life. Meleager's sensuality is

condoned by the delicacy of his sentiment. Tone counts for much in the poetry of revolt against morals. It is only the Stratons, the Beccadellis, the Baudelaires, who, in spite of their consummate form, are consigned to poetical perdition by vulgarity, perversity, obliquity of vision. But the carving of cherry-stones in verse, the turning of triolets and rondeaux, the seeking after sound or colour without heed for sense, is all foredoomed to final failure. The absolute neglect which has fallen on the melodious Italian sonnet-writers of the sixteenth century is due to their cult of art for art's sake, and their indifference to the realities of life. If we ask why Machiavelli's *Mandragora* is inferior to Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, in spite of its profound knowledge of human nature, its brilliant wit, its irresistible humour, its biting satire, and its incomparably closer workmanship, we can only answer that Shakespeare's conception of life was healthy, natural, exhilarating, while Machiavelli's, without displaying the earnestness of revolt, was artificial, morbid, and depressing. The sympathies which every great work of art stimulates tend in the case of Shakespeare's play to foster, in the case of Machiavelli's to stunt, the all-essential elements of social happiness and vigour. In point of form, the *Mandragora* has better right to be a classic comedy than the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. But the application of ideas to life in it is so unsound and so perverse that common sense rejects it ; we tire of living in so false a world.

Without multiplying instances, it can be affirmed, with no dread of opposition, that all art, to be truly great art, to be permanent and fresh and satisfying through a hundred generations, to yield the bread and wine of daily sustenance for men and women in successive ages, must be moralised—must be in harmony with those principles of conduct, that tone of feeling, which it is the self-preservative instinct of civilised humanity to strengthen. This does not mean that the artist should be consciously didactic or obtrusively

ethical. The objects of ethics and of art are distinct. The one analyses and instructs ; the other embodies and delights. But since all the arts give form to thought and feeling, it follows that the greatest art is that which includes in its synthesis the fullest complex of thoughts and feelings. The more complete the poet's grasp of human nature as a whole, the more complete his presentation of life in organised complexity, the greater he will be. Now the whole struggle of the human race from barbarism to civilisation is one continuous effort to maintain and to extend its moral dignity. It is by the conservation and alimentation of moral qualities that we advance. The organisation of our faculties into a perfect whole is moral harmony. Therefore artists who aspire to greatness can neither be adverse nor indifferent to ethics. In each case they proclaim their own inadequacy to the subject-matter of their art, humanity. In each case they present a maimed and partial portrait of their hero, man. In each case they must submit, however exquisite their style, however acute their insight, to be excluded from the supreme company of the immortals. We need do no more than name the chiefs of European poetry—Homer, Pindar, Æschylus, Sophocles, Virgil, Horace, Dante, Shakespeare, Molière—in order to recognise the fact that these owe their superiority to the completeness of their representation, to their firm grasp upon the harmony of human faculties in large morality. It is this which makes *classical* and *humane* literature convertible terms. It is this which has led all classes and ages of men back and back to these great poets as to their familiar friends and teachers, "the everlasting solace of mankind."

While substantially agreeing with Mr. Arnold, it may be possible to take exception to the form of his definition. He lays too great stress, perhaps, on the phrases, *application* of ideas, and *criticism*. The first might be qualified as misleading, because it seems to attribute an ulterior purpose to the poet ; the second as tending to confound two separate

faculties, the creative and the judicial. Plato's conception of poetry as an inspiration, a divine instinct, may be nearer to the truth. The application of ideas should not be too conscious, else the poet sinks into the preacher. The criticism of life should not be too much his object, else the poet might as well have written essays. What is wanted is that, however spontaneous his utterance may be, however he may aim at only beauty in his work, or "sing but as the linnet sings," his message should be adequate to healthy and mature humanity. His intelligence of what is noble and enduring, his expression of a full harmonious personality, is enough to moralise his work. It is even better that he should not turn aside to comment. That is the function of the homilist. We must learn how to live from him less by his precepts, than by his examples and by being in his company. It would no doubt be misunderstanding Mr. Arnold to suppose that he estimates poetry by the gnomic sentences conveyed in it, or that he intends to say that the greatest poets have deliberately used their art as the vehicle of moral teaching. Yet there is a double danger in the wording of his definitions. On the one hand, if we accept them too literally, we run the risk of encouraging that false view of poetry which led the Byzantines to prefer Euripides to Sophocles, because he contained a greater number of quotable maxims; which brought the humanists of the sixteenth century to the incomprehensible conclusion that Seneca had improved upon the Greek drama by infusing more of sententious gravity into his speeches; which caused Tasso to invent an *ex post facto* allegory for the *Gerusalemme*, and Spenser to describe Ariosto's mad Orlando, the triumphant climax of that poet's irony, as "a good governor and a virtuous man." On the other hand, there is the peril of forgetting that the prime aim of all art is at bottom only presentation. That, and that alone, distinguishes the arts, including poetry, from every other operation of the intellect, and justifies Hegel's general definition of artistic

beauty as "Die sinnliche Erscheinung der Idee." Poetry is not so much a criticism of life as a revelation of life, a presentment of life according to the poet's capacity for observing and displaying it in forms that reproduce it for his readers. The poet is less a judge than a seer and reporter. If he judges, it is as light, falling upon an object, showing its inequalities, discovering its loveliness, may be said to judge. The greatest poet is not the poet who has said the best things about life, but he whose work most fully and faithfully reflects life in its breadth and largeness, eliminating what is accidental, trivial, temporary, local, or transmuting simple motives into symbols of the universal by his treatment. He teaches less by what he inculcates than by what he shows; and the truth of Plato's above-mentioned theory is that he may himself be unaware of the far-reaching lessons he communicates. From Shakespeare we could better afford to lose the profound remarks on life in *Timon* or *Troilus and Cressida*, than the delineation of Othello's passion. The speeches of Nestor in the *Iliad* are less valuable than the portrait of Achilles; and what Achilles says about fame, heroism, death, and friendship could be sooner spared than the presentment of his action.

The main thing to keep in mind is this, that the world will very willingly let die in poetry what does not contribute to its intellectual strength and moral vigour. In the long run, therefore, poetry full of matter and moralised wins the day. But it must, before all else, be poetry. The application of the soundest moral ideas, the finest criticism of life, will not save it from oblivion, if it fails in the essential qualities that constitute a work of art. Imagination, or the power to see clearly and to project forcibly; fancy, or the power to flash new light on things familiar, and by their combination to delight the mind with novelty; creative genius, or the power of giving form and substance, life and beauty to the figments of the brain; style, or the power to sustain a flawless

and unwavering distinction of utterance; dramatic energy, or the power to make men and women move before us with self-evident reality in fiction; passion, sympathy, enthusiasm, or the power of feeling and communicating feeling, of understanding and arousing emotion; lyrical inspiration, or the power of spontaneous singing—these are among the many elements that go to make up poetry. These, no doubt, are alluded to by Mr. Arnold in the clause referring to "poetic beauty and poetic truth." But it is needful to insist upon them, after having dwelt so long upon the matter and the moral tone of poetry. No sane critic can deny that the possession of one or more of these qualities in any very eminent degree will save a poet from the neglect to which moral revolt or indifference might otherwise condemn him. Ariosto's commonplaceness of feeling, Shelley's crude and discordant opinions, Leopardi's overwhelming pessimism, Heine's morbid sentimentality, Byron's superficiality and cynicism, are cloaked and covered by the saving virtues of imagination, lyrical inspiration, poetic style, humour, intensity and sweep of passion. The very greatest poets of the world have combined all these qualities, together with that sound humanity which confers upon them immortal freshness. Of Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, Æschylus, Dante, Virgil, Shakespeare, Molière, Goethe, it is only possible to say that one or other element of poetic achievement has been displayed more eminently than the rest, that one or other has been held more obviously in abeyance, when we come to distinguish each great master from his peers. But lesser men may rest their claims to immortality upon slighter merits; and among these merits it will be found impossible to exclude what we call form, style, and the several poetic qualities above enumerated. To borrow a burlesque metaphor from the Oxford schools, a poet may win his second-class on his moral philosophy papers, if the others do not drag him down below the level of recognition; or he may win upon

his taste papers, if he has not been plucked in divinity. It is only the supreme few whom we expect to be equally good all round. Shelley and Leopardi have, perhaps, the same prospect of survival on their artistic merits, as Wordsworth on the strength of his moral ideas.

It will be seen that we have now arrived at Mr. Arnold's attempt to place Wordsworth among the European poets of the last two centuries. Omitting Goethe and living men, it seems, to Mr. Arnold, indubitable that to Wordsworth belongs the palm. This distinction of being the second greatest modern poet since the death of Molière is awarded to Wordsworth on his moral philosophy paper. "Where, then, is Wordsworth's superiority? It is here: he deals with more of *life* than they do; he deals with *life*, as a whole, more powerfully." There is some occult fascination in the game of marking competitors for glory, and publishing class-lists of poets, artists, and other eminent persons. For myself, I confess that it seems about as reasonable to enter Wordsworth, Dryden, Voltaire, Leopardi, Klopstock, and all the rest of them for the stakes of poetical primacy, and to announce with a flourish of critical trumpets that Wordsworth is the winner, as to run the moss-rose against the jessamine, carnation, clematis, crown imperial, double daisy, and other favourites of the flower-garden. Lovers of poets and of flowers will have their partialities; and those who have best cultivated powers of reflection and expression will most plausibly support their preference with arguments. There the matter ends; for, both in the case of the poets and the flowers, the qualities which stimulate our several admirations are too various in kind to be compared. Mr. Arnold has undoubtedly given excellent reasons for the place he assigns to Wordsworth. But it is dangerous for Wordsworth's advocate to prove too much. He has already gained a firm, a permanent, an honourable place upon the muster-roll of English poets. Why undertake the task of proving him the

greatest? Parnassus is a sort of heaven, and we know what answer was given to the sons of Zebedee.

The final test of greatness in a poet is his adequacy to human nature at its best; his feeling for the balance of sense, emotion, will, intellect in moral harmony; his faculty for regarding the whole of life, and representing it in all its largeness. If this be true, dramatic and epical poetry must be the most enduring, the most instructive monuments of creative genius in verse. These forms bring into quickest play and present in fullest activity the many-sided motives of our life on earth. Yet the lyrist has a sphere scarcely second in importance to that of the epic and dramatic poets. The thought and feeling he expresses may, if his nature be adequate, embrace the whole gamut of humanity; and if his expression be sufficient, he may give the form of universality to his experience, creating magic mirrors wherein all men shall see their own hearts reflected and glorified without violation of reality or truth. Wordsworth's fame will rest upon his lyrics, if we extend the term to include his odes, sonnets, and some narrative poems in stanzas—on these, and on a few of his meditative pieces in blank verse. His long philosophical experiments—the "Prelude," the "Excursion"—will be read for the light they cast upon the poet's mind, and for occasional passages of authentic inspiration. Taken as a whole, they are too unequal in execution, too imperfectly penetrated with the vital spirit of true poetry, to stand the test of time or wake the enthusiasm of centuries of students. Those, then, who love and reverence Wordsworth, for whom from earliest boyhood he has been a name of worship, will thank the delicate and sympathetic critic who has here collected Wordsworth's masterpieces in the compass of three hundred pages. They will also thank him for the preface in which he has pointed out the sterling qualities of Wordsworth's poetry. After speaking of Wordsworth's debt to Burns, who first in a century of false taste used "a

style of perfect plainness, relying for effect solely on the weight and force of that which with entire fidelity it utters," Mr. Arnold introduces the following paragraph as to Wordsworth's handling of that style:

> Still Wordsworth's use of it has something unique and unmatchable. Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. This arises from two causes: from the profound sincereness with which Wordsworth feels his subject, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of his subject itself. He can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first-hand, almost austere naturalness. His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in the poem of "Revolution and Independence"; but it is as bald as the bare mountain-tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur.

This is assuredly the truest and finest description which has yet been written of Wordsworth's manner at its best; and the account rendered of the secret of his charm is no less to the point: "Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple elementary affections and duties, and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it." At the same time Mr. Arnold recognises the poet's inequalities, and the critical importance of his essay consists mainly in the broad and clear distinction he has made between what is more and less valuable in his work. "In Wordsworth's case, the accident, for so it may almost be called, of inspiration is of peculiar importance. No poet, perhaps, is so evidently filled with a new and sacred energy when the inspiration is upon him; no poet, when it fails him, is so left 'weak as is a breaking wave.'" The object, therefore, of Mr. Arnold is "to disengage the poems which show his power, and to present them to the English-speaking public and to the world." He thinks that the volume "contains everything, or nearly everything, which may best serve him with the majority of lovers of poetry, nothing which may disserve him." Tastes

will differ considerably about both clauses of this sentence; for while Wordsworthians may complain that too much has been omitted, others who are anxious that our great and beloved poet should appear before the world with only his best singing robes around him, may desire an even stricter censorship than Mr. Arnold's. In the second lyric, "To a Butterfly," we find this stanza:

> Float near me; do not yet depart!
> Dead times revive in thee:
> Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art,
> A solemn image to my heart,
> My father's family!

No excellence of moral sentiment can redeem the banality of these lines. The last verse, sincerely felt as it may be, respectable as is the emotion it expresses, is from the point of view of art a bathos. A really fine narrative, the "Brothers," contains abundance of writing which, were it not Wordsworth's, might be described, in the favourite phrase of "tenth-rate critics," as prose cut into lengths of ten syllables:

> And now, at last
> From perils manifold, with some small wealth
> Acquired by traffic 'mid the Indian isles,
> To his paternal home he is returned,
> With a determined purpose to resume
> The life he had lived there.

This is bald; but it is not "bald as the bare mountain-tops are bald." It is bald as a letter of introduction is bald, bald as the baldest passages of Crabbe. Can we expect Italians, accustomed to the grandly simple manner of Leopardi's country poems, to accept this? Or choose another example from a ballad called the "Power of Music":

> An Orpheus! An Orpheus!—yes, Faith may grow bold,
> And take to herself all the wonders of old;—
> Near the stately Pantheon you'll meet with the same
> In the street that from Oxford hath borrowed its name.

This is neither bald nor yet genuine; it begins with a conceit, and the epithet applied to the Pantheon is uncouth in its

falseness. Can we expect our American cousins to tolerate the style of this opening stanza for the sake of the noble democratic spirit which breathes through the poem? The "Character of the Happy Warrior" is both conceived and written in the poet's stateliest mood; yet it halts at intervals on lines like these:

> But makes his moral being his prime care . . . .
> By objects, which might force the soul to abate
> Her feeling, rendered more compassionate.

Will Frenchmen, habituated to look for sustained evenness of style in composition, recognise the "Happy Warrior" as a classic? These examples introduce a grave matter for consideration. No lover of Wordsworth could desire the exclusion of the "Brothers," or the "Power of Music," or the "Happy Warrior," from a selection of his poetry, however willingly they might leave the "Butterfly" alone. Yet the failure of perfect art in these three fine poems must prove an obstacle to their final acceptance by readers who make no national, or what Mr. Arnold would call provincial, allowance for Wordsworth. No such allowances are demanded by the work of Keats or Shelley, when subjected to an equally rigorous process of sifting, as that applied to Wordsworth in this volume.

Still if, after study of the greatest literatures of Europe, we feel convinced that Wordsworth is a classic, it does not greatly signify what other nations now think about him. As nothing can confer world-wide celebrity on an inferior poet, however popular at home, so nothing can prevent a classic from attaining his right place in the long run. There is something slightly ridiculous in waiting upon French opinion, and expressing gratitude to M. Henry Cochin or to any other foreign critic for a sensible remark upon Shakespeare. However, as the question has been started whether Wordsworth is likely to become a poet of cosmopolitan fame, it is worth while to consider what these chances are. Mr. Arnold, com-

paring him with the acknowledged masters of the art in Europe, comes to the conclusion that he has "left a body of poetical work superior in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, to that which any of the others has left." What these qualities are we have already seen. It is the superior depth, genuineness, sincerity, and truth of Wordsworth's humanity, the solid and abiding vigour of his grasp upon the realities of existence, upon the joys that cannot be taken from us, upon the goods of life which suffer no deduction by chance and change, and are independent of all accidents of fortune, that render Wordsworth's poems indestructible. He is always found upon the side of that which stimulates the stored-up moral forces of mankind. If I remember rightly, he says that he meant his works "to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier, to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous." This promise he has kept. When he touches the antique, it is to draw from classic myth or history a lesson weighty with wisdom applicable to our present experience. "Laodamia" has no magic to compete with the "Bride of Corinth"; but we rise from its perusal with passions purified by terror and compassion. "Dion" closes on this note:

> Him only pleasure leads, and peace attends,
> Him, only him, the shield of Jove defends,
> Whose means are fair and spotless as his ends.

When he writes a poem on a flower, it is to draw forth thoughts of joy or strength, or consolation. His "Daffodils" have not the pathos which belongs to Herrick's, nor has he composed anything in this style to match the sublimity of Leopardi's "Ginestra." But Leopardi crushes the soul of hope out of us by the abyss of dreadful contemplation into which the broom upon the lava of Vesuvius plunges him. Wordsworth never does this. The worst that can be said of

him is that, as Mr. Swinburne said in a preface to Byron, he shreds Nature's vegetables into a domestic saucepan for daily service. Still the homely *pot au feu* of the moralist has no less right to exist than a wizard's cauldron of sublimity, and probably will be found to last and wear longer. Wordsworth has said nothing so exquisite as Poliziano upon the fragility of rose-leaves, nor has he used the rose, like Ariosto, for similitudes of youthful beauty. But the moralising of these Italian amourists softens and relaxes. Wordsworth's poems on the Celandine brace and invigorate. His enthusiasms are sober and solid. Excepting the ode on Immortality, where much that cannot be proved is taken for granted, and excepting an occasional exaggeration of some favourite tenet, as in this famous stanza—

> One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil, and of good,
> Than all the sages can—

his impulsive utterances are based on a sound foundation, and will bear the test both of experience and analysis. In this respect he differs from Shelley, whose far more fiery and magnetic enthusiasms do not convince us of their absolute sincerity, and are often at variance with probability. In the case of Shelley we must be contented with the noble, the audacious ardour he communicates. The further satisfaction of feeling that his judgments are as right as his aspirations are generous, is too frequently denied. Wordsworth does not soar so high, nor on so powerful a pinion, but he is a safer guide. His own comparison between the nightingale and the stock-dove might be used as an allegory of the two poets. Their several addresses to the skylark give some measure of their different qualities.

The tone of a poet, the mood he communicates, the atmosphere he surrounds us with, is more important even than what he says. This tone is the best or the worst we get from

him; it makes it good or bad to be with him. Now it is always good to be with Wordsworth. His personality is like a climate at once sedative and stimulative. I feel inclined to compare it to the influence of the high Alps, austere but kindly, demanding some effort of renunciation, but yielding in return a constant sustenance, and soothing the tired nerves that need a respite from the passions and the fever of the world. The landscape in these regions, far above the plains and cities where men strive, is grave and sober. It has none of the allurements of the south—no waving forests, or dancing waves, or fretwork of sun and shadow cast by olive branches on the flowers. But it has also no deception, and no languor, and no decay. In autumn the bald hillsides assume their robes of orange and of crimson, faintly, delicately spread upon the barren rocks. The air is singularly clear and lucid, suffering no illusion, but satisfying the sense of vision with a marvellous sincerity. And when winter comes, the world for months together is clad in flawless purity of blue and white, with shy, rare, unexpected beauty shed upon the scene from hues of sunrise or sunset. On first acquaintance this Alpine landscape is repellent and severe. We think it too ascetic to be lived in. But familiarity convinces us that it is good and wholesome to abide in it. We learn to love its reserve even more than the prodigality of beauty showered on fortunate islands where the orange and the myrtle flower in never-ending summer. Something of the sort is experienced by those who have yielded themselves to Wordsworth's influence. The luxuriance of Keats, the splendour of Shelley, the oriental glow of Coleridge, the torrid energy of Byron, though good in themselves and infinitely precious, are felt to be less permanent, less uniformly satisfying, less continuously bracing, than the sober simplicity of the poet from whose ruggedness at first we shrank.

It is a pity that Wordsworth could not rest satisfied in leaving this tone to its natural operation on his readers "in a

wise passiveness." He passes too readily over from the poet to the moraliser, clenching lessons which need no enforcement by precepts that remind us of the preacher. This leads to a not unnatural movement of revolt in his audience, and often spoils the severe beauty of his art. We do not care to have a somewhat dull but instructive episode from ordinary village life interrupted by a stanza of admonition like the following:

> O Reader! had you in your mind
> Such stores as silent thought can bring,
> O gentle Reader! you would find
> A tale in everything.
> What more I have to say is short,
> And you must kindly take it:
> It is no tale; but, should you *think*,
> Perhaps a tale you'll make it.

After this the real pathos of "Simon Lee" cannot fail to fall somewhat flat. And yet it is not seldom that Wordsworth's didactic reflections contain the pith of his sublimest poetry. Beautiful as the tale of the "White Doe" is æsthetically, it can bear the closing stanzas of precept:

> Grey-headed Shepherd, thou hast spoken well;
> Small difference lies between thy creed and mine:
> This Beast not unobserved by Nature fell;
> His death was mourned by sympathy divine.
>
> The Being, that is in the clouds and air,
> That is in the green leaves among the groves,
> Maintains a deep and reverential care
> For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.
>
> The Pleasure-house is dust:—behind, before,
> There is no common waste, no common gloom;
> But Nature, in due course of time, once more
> Shall here put on her beauty and her bloom.
>
> She leaves these objects to a slow decay,
> That what we are, and have been, may be known;
> But, at the coming of the milder day,
> These monuments shall all be overgrown.

Up to this point the application of moral ideas has been made with perfect success. The artistic charm has not been

broken. But the last stanza falls into the sermonising style, as though the poet's inspiration failed him, and a pedagogue, with no clear conception of the unalterable order of the material universe, had taken his place:

> One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,
> Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals,
> Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
> With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.

The tone I have attempted to describe, as of some clear upland climate, at once soothing and invigorating, austere but gifted with rare charms for those who have submitted to its influence, this tone, unique in poetry, outside the range, perhaps, of Scandinavian literature, will secure for Wordsworth, in England at any rate, an immortality of love and fame. He is, moreover, the poet of man's dependence upon Nature. More deeply, because more calmly, than Shelley, with the passionate enthusiasms of youth subdued to the firm convictions of maturity, he expressed for modern men that creed which, for want of a better word, we designate as Pantheism, but which might be described as the inner soul of Science, the bloom of feeling and enthusiasm destined to ennoble and to poetise our knowledge of the world and of ourselves. In proportion as the sciences make us more intimately acquainted with man's relation to the universe, while the sources of life and thought remain still inscrutable, Wordsworth must take stronger and firmer hold on minds which recognise a mystery in Nature far beyond our ken. What Science is not called on to supply, the fervour and the piety that humanise her truths, and bring them into harmony with permanent emotions of the soul, may be found in all that Wordsworth wrote.

The time might come, indeed may not be distant, when lines like those which I have quoted above (p. 312) from the poem composed at Tintern Abbey should be sung in hours

of worship by congregations for whom the "cosmic emotion" is a reality and a religion.

Wordsworth, again, is the poet of the simple and the permanent in social life. He has shown that average human nature may be made to yield the motives of the noblest poems, instinct with passion, glowing with beauty, needing only the insight and the touch of the artist to disengage them from the coarse material of commonplace.

> The moving accident is not my trade :
> To freeze the blood I have no ready arts :
> 'Tis my delight, alone in summer shade,
> To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts.

Should the day arrive when society shall be remodelled upon principles of true democracy, when "plain living and high thinking" shall become the rule, when the vulgarity of manners inseparable from decaying feudalism shall have disappeared, when equality shall be rightly apprehended and refinement be the common mark of humble and wealthy homes—should this golden age of a grander civilisation dawn upon the nations, then Wordsworth will be recognised as the prophet and apostle of the world's rejuvenescence. He, too, has something to give, a quiet dignity, a nobleness and loftiness of feeling joined to primitive simplicity, the tranquillity of self-respect, the calm of self-assured uprightness, which it would be very desirable for the advocates of fraternity and equality to assimilate. Of science and democracy Wordsworth in his lifetime was suspicious. It is almost a paradox to proclaim him the poet of democracy and science. Yet there is that in his work which renders it congenial to the mood of men powerfully influenced by scientific ideas, and expecting from democracy the regeneration of society at no incalculably distant future.

After all, Wordsworth is essentially an English poet. He has the limitations no less than the noble qualities of the English character powerfully impressed upon him. Shelley

brought into English literature a new ideality, a new element of freedom and expansion. Mazzini greeted Byron with enthusiastic panegyric as the poet of emancipation. Wordsworth moves in a very different region from that of either Byron or Shelley. He remains a stiff, consistent, immitigable Englishman ; and it may be questioned whether his stubborn English temperament, his tough insular and local personality, no less than a certain homeliness in his expression, may not prove an obstacle to his acceptance as a cosmopolitan poet. I find a curious note on British literature in the " Democratic Vistas " of Walt Whitman, a portion of which, though it is long, may here be not unprofitably cited :

> I add that, while England is among the greatest of lands in political freedom, or the idea of it, and in stalwart personal character, etc., the spirit of English literature is not great—at least, is not greatest—and its products are no models for us. With the exception of Shakespeare, there is no first-class genius, or approaching to first-class, in that literature which, with a truly vast amount of value and of artificial beauty (largely from the classics), is almost always material, sensual, not spiritual—almost always congests, makes plethoric, not frees, expands, dilates—is cold, anti-democratic, loves to be sluggish and stately, and shows much of that characteristic of vulgar persons, the dread of saying or doing something not at all improper in itself, but unconventional, and that may be laughed at. In its best, the sombre pervades it—it is moody, melancholy, and to give it its due, expresses in characters and plots these qualities in an unrivalled manner. Yet not as the black thunder-storms, and in great normal, crashing passions, as of the Greek dramatists—clearing the air, refreshing afterward, bracing with power ; but as in *Hamlet*, moping, sick, uncertain, and leaving ever after a secret taste for the blues, the morbid fascination, the luxury of woe.

This is a severe verdict to be spoken by one whose main interest in life appears to be the building up of American personality by means of great literature. To the Americans, destined to be by far the most numerous of " the English-speaking public," our poetry cannot remain a matter of indifference, nor can their criticism of it be passed over by us with neglect. They are in the unique position of possessing our language as their mother tongue, and at the same time of

contemplating our literature from a point of view that is the opposite of insular. Comparing English poetry with the spirit of the American people, whom he knows undoubtedly far better than the refined students of Boston, Walt Whitman comes to the conclusion that there is but little in it that will suit their needs or help them forward on the path of their development. Yet I cannot but think that, had he read Wordsworth, he would have made at least a qualified exception in his favour.[1] Wordsworth is not "sombre, moody, melancholy," is certainly not afraid of the "unconventional," does not borrow "artificial beauty" from the classics or elsewhere. In fact, the faults here found with English poetry in general are contradicted in an eminent degree by his best poetry. But, though this seems clear enough, it remains true that in Wordsworth we find a ponderosity, a personal and patriotic egoism, a pompousness, a self-importance in dwelling upon details that have value chiefly for the poet himself or for the neighbourhood he lives in, which may not unnaturally appear impertinent or irksome to readers of a different nationality. Will the essential greatness of Wordsworth, whereof so much has been already said, his humanity, his wisdom, his healthiness, his bracing tone, his adequacy to the finer inner spirit of a scientific and democratic age—will these solid and imperishable qualities overcome the occasionally defective utterance, the want of humour and lightness, the obstinate insularity of character, the somewhat repellent intensity of local interest, which cannot but be found in him?

[1] This I gather from the modification of the above passage in favour of "the cheerful" name of Walter Scott.

IS MUSIC THE TYPE OR MEASURE OF ALL ART?

Mr. Matthew Arnold's definition of Poetry as "at bottom a Criticism of Life," insisted somewhat too strenuously on the purely intellectual and moral aspects of art. There is a widely different way of regarding the same subject-matter, which finds acceptance with many able thinkers of the present time. This ignores the criticism of life altogether, and dwells with emphasis upon sensuous presentation, emotional suggestion, and technical perfection, as the central and essential qualities of art. In order to steer a safe course between the Scylla of excessive intellectuality, and the Charybdis of excessive sensuousness, it will be well to examine what a delicate and philosophical critic has published on this second theory of the arts. With this object in view, I choose a paper by Mr. Walter Pater on "The School of Giorgione."[1] The opinion that art has a sphere independent of intellectual or ethical intention is here advocated with lucidity, singular charm of style, and characteristic reserve.

Mr. Pater opens the discussion by very justly condemning the tendency of popular critics "to regard all products of art as various forms of poetry." "For this criticism," he says, "poetry, music, and painting are but translations into different languages of one and the same fixed quantity of imaginative thought, supplemented by certain technical qualities of colour in painting, of sound in music, of rhythmical words in poetry." "In this way," he adds, "the sensuous element in art, and

[1] *Fortnightly Review*, October, 1887.

with it almost everything in art that is essentially artistic, is made a matter of indifference." He then proceeds to point out that each of the fine arts has its own sphere, its own untranslatable mode of expression, its own way of reaching the imaginative reason through the senses, its own special responsibilities to its material.

So far, every intelligent student of the subject will agree with him. Nor will there be any substantial difference of opinion as to the second point on which he insists — namely, that each of the arts, while pursuing its own object, and obeying its own laws, may sometimes assimilate the quality of a sister-art. This, adopting German phraseology, Mr. Pater terms the *Anders-streben* of an art, or the reaching forward from its own sphere into the sphere of another art. We are familiar with the thought that Greek dramatic poetry borrowed something of its form from sculpture, and that the Italian romantic epic was determined to a great extent by the analogy of painting. Nor is it by any means an innovation in criticism to refer all the artistic products of a nation to some dominant fine art, for which that nation possessed a special aptitude, and which consequently gave colour and complexion to its whole æsthetical activity. Accordingly, Mr. Pater, both in the doctrine of the independence of each art, and also in the doctrine of the *Anders-streben* of one art toward another, advances nothing which excites opposition.

At this point, however, he passes into a region of more questionable speculation. Having rebuked popular criticism for using poetry as the standard whereby to judge the arts, he proceeds to make a similar use of music ; for he lays it down that all the arts in common aspire "towards the principle of music, music being the typical, or ideally consummate art, the object of the great *Anders-streben* of all art, of all that is artistic, or partakes of artistic qualities."

The reason for this assertion is stated with precision :[1]

[1] *Fortnightly Review*, p. 528. The italics are Mr. Pater's.

All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music. For while in all other works of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it. That the mere matter of a poem, for instance, its subject, its given incidents or situation; that the mere matter of a picture, the actual circumstances of an event, the actual topography of a landscape, should be nothing without the form, the spirit of the handling; that this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter; this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.

Having illustrated the meaning of this paragraph by references to painting, poetry, furniture, dress, and the details of daily intercourse, Mr. Pater proceeds as follows:[1]

Art, then, is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material; the ideal examples of poetry and painting being those in which the constituent elements of the composition are so welded together that the material or subject no longer strikes the intellect only; nor the form, the eye or ear only; but form and matter, in their union or identity, present one single effect to the imaginative reason, that complex faculty for which every thought and feeling is twin-born with its sensible analogue or symbol.

It is the art of music which most completely realises this artistic ideal, this perfect identification of form and matter, this strange chemistry, uniting, in the integrity of pure light, contrasted elements. In its ideal, consummate moments, the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate each other; and to it, therefore, to the condition of its perfect moments, all the arts may be supposed constantly to tend and aspire. Music, then, not poetry, as is so often supposed, is the true type or measure of consummate art. Therefore, although each art has its incommunicable element, its untranslatable order of impressions, its unique mode of reaching the imaginative reason, yet the arts may be represented as continually struggling after the law or principle of music, to a condition which music alone completely realises; and one of the chief functions of æsthetic criticism, dealing with the concrete products of art, new or old, is to estimate the degree in which each of those products approaches in this sense to musical law.

If this means that art, as art, aspires toward a complete absorption of the matter into the form—toward such a blending of the animative thought or emotion with the em-

[1] *Fortnightly Review*, p. 530.

bodying vehicle that the shape produced shall be the only right and perfect manifestation of a spiritual content to the senses, so that, while we contemplate the work, we cannot conceive their separation—then in this view there is nothing either new or perilous. It was precisely this which constituted the consummate excellence of Greek sculpture. The sculptor found so apt a shape for the expression of ideal personality, that his marble became an apocalypse of godhood. It was precisely this, again, which made the poetry of Virgil artistically perfect. In the words of the most eloquent of Virgil's panegyrists: "What is meant by the vague praise bestowed on Virgil's unequalled style is practically this, that he has been, perhaps, more successful than any other poet in fusing together the expressed and the suggested emotion; that he has discovered the hidden music which can give to every shade of feeling its distinction, its permanence, and its charm; that his thoughts seem to come to us on wings of melodies prepared for them from the foundation of the world."[1]

But it does not seem that Mr. Pater means this only. We have the right to conclude from passages which may be emphasized, that he has in view the more questionable notion that the fine arts in their most consummate moments all aspire toward vagueness of intellectual intention—that a well-defined subject in poetry and painting and sculpture is a hindrance to artistic quality—that the delight of the eye or of the ear is of more moment than the thought of the brain. Art, he says, is "always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material." "Lyrical poetry," he says, "just because in it you are least able to detach the matter from the form without a deduction of something from that matter itself, is, at least artistically, the highest and most complete form of poetry. And the very perfection of such poetry often seems to depend in part *on a*

[1] Essays, Classical, by F. W. H. Myers, p. 115.

certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the definite meaning almost expires, or reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding."[1]

This is ingenious; and it cannot be denied that the theory has a plausible appearance. Yet, were we to carry Mr. Pater's principles to their logical extremity, we should have to prefer Pope's "Verses by a Person of Quality" to the peroration of the "Dunciad," and a noble specimen of Japanese screen-painting to Turner's Téméraire or Raphael's School of Athens.

So far as the art of poetry goes, he seems to overstate a truth, which is finely and exactly expressed by Mr. Myers in the essay on Virgil from which I have already quoted. The passage is long; but it puts so well the point which Mr. Pater has perhaps exaggerated, regarding the importance of the sensuous and suggestive elements in poetry, that I venture to think my readers will be glad to be reminded of it:[2]

> The range of human thoughts and emotions greatly transcends the range of such symbols as man has invented to express them; and it becomes, therefore, the business of Art to use these symbols in a double way. They must be used for the direct representation of thought and feeling; but they must also be combined by so subtle an imagination as to suggest much which there is no means of directly expressing. And this can be done; for experience shows that it is possible so to arrange forms, colours, and sounds as to stimulate the imagination in a new and inexplicable way. This power makes the painter's art an imaginative as well as an imitative one; and gives birth to the art of the musician, whose symbols are hardly imitative at all, but express emotions which, till music suggests them, have been not only unknown, but unimaginable. Poetry is both an imitative and an imaginative art. As a choice and condensed form of emotional speech, it possesses the reality which depends on its directly recalling our previous thoughts and feelings. But as a system of rhythmical and melodious effects—not indebted for their potency to their associated ideas alone—it appeals also to that mysterious power by which mere arrangements of sound can convey an emotion which no one could have predicted beforehand, and which no known laws can explain.
>
> And, indeed, in poetry of the first order, almost every word (to use a

---

[1] *Fortnightly Review*, p. 529. Here the italics are not Mr. Pater's, but mine.

[2] Essays, Classical, pp. 113—115.

mathematical metaphor) is raised to a higher power. It continues to be an articulate sound and a logical step in the argument; but it becomes also a musical sound and a centre of emotional force. It becomes a musical sound—that is to say, its consonants and vowels are arranged to bear a relation to the consonants and vowels near it—a relation of which accent, quantity, rhyme, assonance, and alliteration are specialised forms, but which may be of a character more subtle than any of these. And it becomes a centre of emotional force; that is to say, the complex associations which it evokes modify the associations evoked by other words in the same passage in a way quite distinct from grammatical or logical connection. The poet, therefore, must avoid two opposite dangers. If he thinks too exclusively of the music and the colouring of his verses—of the imaginative means of suggesting thought and feeling—what he writes will lack reality and sense. But if he cares only to communicate definite thought and feeling according to the ordinary laws of eloquent speech, his verse is likely to be deficient in magical and suggestive power.

This is right. This makes equitable allowance for the claims alike of the material and the form of art—the intellectual and emotional content, the sensuous and artificial embodiment.

But to return to Mr. Pater. His doctrine that art is "always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence," his assertion that the perfection of lyrical poetry "often seems to depend in part on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject," contradict the utterances of the greatest craftsmen in the several arts—Milton's sublime passages on the function of Poetry; Sidney's and Shelley's Defences of Poesy; Goethe's doctrine of "the motive"; Rossetti's canon that "fundamental brain-work" is the characteristic of all great art; Michel Angelo's and Beethoven's observations upon their own employment of sculpture and music. Rigidly applied, his principles would tend to withdraw art from the sphere of spirituality altogether. Yet, considered as paradoxes, they have real value, inasmuch as they recall attention to the sensuous side of art, and direct the mind from such antagonistic paradoxes as the one propounded by Mr. Matthew Arnold in his preface to Wordsworth.

It is difficult to see in what way Mr. Pater can evade the strictures he has passed upon his brethren, the popular critics.

Whether a man selects poetry or selects music as the "true type or measure of consummate art," to which "in common all the arts aspire," will depend doubtless partly upon personal susceptibilities, and partly upon the theory he has formed of art in general. Both the popular critics and Mr. Pater take up their position upon equally debatable ground. The case stands thus. Mr. Pater is of opinion that the best poetry is that in which there is the least appeal to "mere intelligence," in which the verbal melody and the suggestive way of handling it are more important than the intellectual content. He thinks that the best pictures are those in which the "mere subject" is brought into the least prominence. Holding these views, he selects music as the "true type and measure of consummate art." Herein he is consistent; for music, by reason of its limitations, is the least adapted of all arts for the expression of an intellectual content. The popular critic, on the other hand, is of opinion that the best poetry is that which has the clearest, the most human, and the most impressive motive. He thinks that the best pictures are those which, beside being delightful by their drawing and colour, give food for meditation and appeal to mental faculty. Holding these views, he selects poetry as the "true type and measure of consummate art." Herein he too is consistent; for poetry, by reason of its limitations, is the best adapted of all arts for appealing to intelligence and embodying motives with lucidity.

Mr. Pater and the popular critic are equally right or equally wrong. We are, in fact, confronting two different conceptions of art, each of which is partial and one-sided, because the one insists too strongly on the sensuous form, the other on the mental stuff, of art.

Suppose a man does not accept Mr. Pater's doctrine; supposing he starts from another point of view, and demands some defined conception in a work of art as well as a sensuous appeal to our imaginative reason; supposing he regards art in its highest manifestation as a mode of utterance for what is spiritual in man, as a language for communicating the ideal

world of thought and feeling in sensible form; then he will be tempted to select not music but poetry as his type and measure. Thus it is manifest that critics who refer to the standard of poetry, and critics who refer to the standard of music, differ in this mainly that they hold divergent theories regarding the function of art in general.

The debatable point for consideration is whether either the popular critic rebuked by Mr. Pater or Mr. Pater himself can legitimately choose one of the arts as the "type and measure" for the rest. I maintain that both are expressing certain personal predilections, whereby the abiding relations of the arts run some risk of being overlooked. What the matter really comes to is this: while the one proclaims his preference for sensuous results, the other proclaims a preference for defined intelligible content. Each does violence by his selection to one or other of the arts. The critic who demands a meaning at any cost, will find it hard to account for his appreciation of music or of architecture. Mr. Pater, in order to complete his theory, is forced to depreciate the most sublime and powerful masterpieces of poetry. In his view drama and epic doff their caps before a song, in which verbal melody and the communication of a mood usurp upon invention, passion, cerebration, definite meaning.

Just as the subjectivity of any age or nation erects one art into the measure of the rest, so the subjectivity of a particular critic will induce him to choose poetry or music, or it may be sculpture, as his standard. The fact remains that each art possesses its own strength and its own weakness, and that no one of the arts, singly and by itself, achieves the whole purpose of art. That purpose is to express the content of human thought and feeling in sensuously beautiful form by means of various vehicles, imposing various restrictions, and implying various methods of employment. If we seek the maximum of intelligibility, we find it in poetry; but at the same time we have here the minimum of immediate effect upon the

senses. If we seek the maximum of sensuous effect, we find it in music; but at the same time we have here the minimum of appeal to intelligence. Architecture, in its inability to express definite ideas, stands next to music; but its sensuous influence upon the mind is feebler. As a compensation, it possesses the privilege of permanence, of solidity, of impressive magnitude, of undefinable but wonder-waking symbolism. Sculpture owes its power to the complete and concrete presentation of human form, to the perfect incarnation of ideas in substantial shapes of bronze or stone, on which light and shadows from the skies can fall: this it alone of all the arts displays. It has affinities with architecture on the one hand, owing to the material it uses, and to poetry on the other, owing to the intelligibility of its motives. Painting is remote from architecture; but it holds a place where sculpture, poetry, and music let their powers be felt. Though dependent on design, it can tell a story better than sculpture; and in this respect painting more nearly approaches poetry. It can communicate a mood without relying upon definite or strictly intelligible motives; in this respect it borders upon music. Of all the arts, painting is the most flexible, the most mimetic, the most illusory. It cannot satisfy our understanding like poetry; it cannot flood our souls with the same noble sensuous joy as music; it cannot present such perfect and full shapes as sculpture; it cannot affect us with the sense of stability or with the mysterious suggestions which belong to architecture. But it partakes of all the other arts through its speciality of surface-delineation, and adds its own delightful gift of colour, second in sensuous potency only to sound.

Such is the prism of the arts; each distinct, but homogeneous, and tinctured at their edges with hues borrowed from the sister-arts. Their differences derive from the several vehicles they are bound to employ. Their unity is the spiritual substance which they express in common. Abstract beauty, the *ἰδέα τοῦ καλοῦ*, is one and indivisible. But the

concrete shapes which manifest this beauty, decompose it, just as the prism analyses white light into colours. "Multæ terricolis linguæ cœlestibus una."

It is by virtue of this separateness and by virtue of these sympathies that we are justified in calling the poetry of Sophocles or Landor, the painting of Michel Angelo or Mantegna, the music of Gluck or Cherubini, sculpturesque; Lorenzetti's frescoes and Dante's "Paradiso," architectural; Tintoretto's Crucifixion and the Genius of the Vatican, poetical; Shelley's lyrics in *Prometheus Unbound* and Titian's Three Ages, musical; the façade of the Certosa at Pavia, pictorial; and so forth, as suggestion and association lead us.

But let it be remembered that this discrimination of an *Anders-streben* in the arts, is after all but fanciful. It is at best a way of expressing our sense of something subjective in the styles of artists or of epochs, not of something in the arts themselves. Let it be still more deeply remembered that if we fix upon any one art as the type and measure for the rest, we are either indulging a personal partiality, or else uttering an arbitrary, and therefore inconclusive, æsthetical hypothesis. The main fact to bear steadily in mind is that beauty is the sensuous manifestation of the idea—that is, of the spiritual element in man and in the world—and that the arts, each in its own way, conveys this beauty to our percipient self. We have to abstain on the one hand from any theory which emphasizes the didactic function of art, and on the other from any theory, however plausible, which diverts attention from the one cardinal truth: namely, that fine and liberal art, as distinguished from mechanical art or the arts of the kitchen and millinery, exists for the embodiment of thought and emotion in forms of various delightfulness, appealing to what has been called the imaginative reason, that complex faculty which is neither mere understanding nor mere sense, by means of divers sensuous suggestions, and several modes of concrete presentation.

THE PATHOS OF THE ROSE IN POETRY.

SOME five years ago there appeared a little volume, named "Ros Rosarum ex Horto Poetarum," and bearing upon its title-page the well-known initials of E. V. B., under which the Hon. Mrs. Richard Cavendish Boyle has given several works of combined literary and artistic merit to the world. This volume is an anthology culled from the poetry of all languages and ages upon the theme of the rose. To make such a collection at once complete would have been almost impossible; and a book not quite complete, like Mrs. Boyle's "Ros Rosarum," has the advantage of suggestiveness and stimulation to the fancy of the reader, which an exhaustive anthology of rose-literature would have failed to convey.

Studying its pages with close attention, I observed that Mrs. Boyle had omitted two important passages in Latin poetry which may be regarded as the twin fountain-heads of a large amount of verses written upon roses in the modern world. On turning to Catullus and Ausonius and comparing the passages in question with some stanzas by Poliziano, Ariosto, Tasso, Guarini, Spenser, Herrick, Waller, Ronsard, and other modern poets, I was so much struck with the examples of literary derivation they afforded, that I composed the following essay, which I now present as an attempt to study the forms of hybridism in poetry.

The first of the two passages in question occurs in the second Epithalamium of Catullus:

Ut flos in sæptis secretus nascitur hortis,
Ignotus pecori, nullo contusus aratro,
Quem mulcent auræ, firmat sol, educat imber;
Multi illum pueri, multæ optavere puellæ:
Idem quem tenui carptus defloruit ungui,
Nulli illum pueri, nullæ optavere puellæ:
Sic virgo dum intacta manet, dum cara suis est,
Quom castum amisit polluto corpore florem,
Nec pueris jocunda manet, nec cara puellis.

It will be noticed that Catullus does not specialise the rose. He speaks indifferently of a flower. But when we examine the imitations of these lines by modern poets, we shall see how their instinct appropriated to the rose the honours of the suggestion. I may also point out that the poet dwells only on the fact that a flower, up-growing on its native stalk, nourished into bloom by the powers of nature, is desirable to all who gaze upon it; but when it has been plucked, the cut flower raises no desire; and so, Catullus says, it is with maidens also.

For English readers I will roughly paraphrase these untranslatable hexameters:

The flower that, closed by garden walls, doth blow,
Which no plough wounds, and no rude cattle know,
But breezes fan, sun fosters, showers shoot higher,
It many lads and many maids desire;
The same, when cropped by cruel hand it fades,
No lads at all desire it, nor no maids:
E'en so the girl, so long her youth doth last
Untouched, on her kind friends affection cast;
But when she stoops to folly, sheds her bloom,
For lads, for maids, hath flown her chaste perfume.

The second of the two classic passages to which I have referred is an Idyll by Ausonius. This poet, who lived from 309 to 392 A.D., was half pagan and half Christian. His genius floated in the atmosphere of the decaying Roman Empire, between influences of the past and future. But what his religious creed was does not greatly signify. As a writer, he expressed, at the latest close of antique

culture, something of the spirit which appears in mediæval, and which pervades modern literature, the spirit of sympathy with nature, and the sense of pathos in ephemeral things. It was Ausonius, then, who wrote the following Idyll on the Rose:

Ver erat et blando mordentia frigora sensu
Spirabat croceo mane revecta dies.
Strictior Eoos præcesserat aura jugales,
Æstiferum suadens anticipare diem.
Errabam riguis per quadrua compita in hortis,
Maturo cupiens me vegetare die.
Vidi concretas per gramina flexa pruinas
Pendere, aut olerum stare cacuminibus;
Caulibus et patulis teretes colludere guttas,
Et cœlestis aquæ pondere tunc gravidas.
Vidi Pæstano candere rosaria cultu,
Exoriente novo roscida Lucifero.
Rara pruinosis canebat gemma frutetis,
Ad primi radios interitura die.
Ambigeres, raperetve rosis Aurora ruborem,
An daret, et flores tingeret orta dies.
Ros unus, color unus, et unum mane duorum,
Sideris et floris nam domina una Venus.
Forsan et unus odor: sed celsior ille per auras
Difflatur, spirat proximus ille magis.
Communis Paphie dea sideris et dea floris
Præcipit unius muricis esse habitum.
Momentum intererat, quo se nascentia florum
Germina comparibus dividerent spatiis.
Hæc viret angusto foliorum tecta galero
Hæc tenui folio purpura rubra notat.
Hæc aperit primi fastigia celsa obelisci,
Mucronem absolvens purpurei capitis.
Vertice collectos illa exsinuabat amictus,
Jam meditans foliis se numerare suis:
Nec mora, ridentis calathi patefecit honorem,
Prodens inclusi semina densa croci.
Hæc modo, quæ toto rutilaverat igne comarum
Pallida collapsis deseritur foliis.
Mirabar celerem fugitiva ætate rapinam,
Et, dum nascuntur, consenuisse rosas.
Ecce, et defluxit rutili coma punica floris,
Dum loquor, et tellus tecta rubore micat.
Tot species tantosque ortus variosque novatus
Una dies aperit, conficit una dies.

Conquerimur Natura, brevis quod gratia florum est?
Ostentata oculis illico dona rapis.
Quam longa una dies, ætas tam longa rosarum,
Quas pubescentes juncta senecta premit.
Quam modo nascentem rutilus conspexit Eous,
Hanc rediens sero vespere vidit anum.
Sed bene, quod paucis licet interitura diebus,
Succedens ævum prorogat ipsa suum.
Collige, virgo, rosas, dum flos novus et nova pubes,
Et memor esto ævum sic properare tuum.

In the course of our analysis we shall see what parts of this Idyll were selected for imitation by modern poets, and what parts they omitted. The beautiful imaginative lines (12—22) in which the morning star and the rose are brought beneath the common guardianship of Venus, have, so far as I know, not been seized upon; although one thought contained in them, that possibly the star may be no less fragrant than the flower, is very modern in its fancy. But first it will be well to call attention to the fact that, while Catullus used the flower of his metaphor only as a symbol of virginity, Ausonius enters into communion with the rose herself as a living creature. For him the flower is no mere emblem. The reflections upon human life which it suggests are only brought forward at the conclusion of his poem, which, in its main structure, is a studied picture of external objects lovingly observed. Another point should be noticed. His sympathy with the short bloom-time of the rose makes him draw from nature pathos which he afterwards applies to man. Hitherto, in classic literature, the rose had been a symbol of love and gladness, celebrated as the ornament of Aphrodite, the pledge of passion, and the chief decoration of life's banquet. In all the authors who praised the rose, from Sappho to the false Anacreon and Philostratus, I remember none who dwelt with insistence on its brevity of beauty. Writing even of dead roses, the anonymous poet of the Anacreontics thinks of their perfume.

χαρίεν ῥόδων δὲ γῆρας
νεότητος ἔσχεν ὀζμήν.

It remained for Ausonius, in the crepuscular interspace between the sunset of the antique and the night which came before the sunrise of the modern age, to develop thus elaborately the motive of fragility in rose life and in human loveliness. For English readers I have made a translation of his Idyll, which may enable them "as in a glass darkly" to perceive its subdued lustre.

'Twas spring, and dawn returning breathed new-born
From saffron skies the bracing chill of morn.
Before day's orient chargers went a breeze,
That whispered: Rise, the sweets of morning seize!
In watered gardens where the cross-paths ran,
Freshness and health I sought ere noon began:
I watched from bending grasses how the rime
In clusters hung, or gemmed the beds of thyme;
How the round beads, on herb and leaf outspread,
Rolled with the weight of dews from heaven's height shed;
Saw the rose-gardens in their Pæstan bloom
Hoar 'neath the dawn-star rising through the gloom.
On every bush those separate splendours gleam,
Doomed to be quenched by day's first arrowy beam.
Here might one doubt: doth morn from roses steal
Their redness, or the rose with dawn anneal?
One hue, one dew, one morn makes both serene;
Of star and flower one Venus reigns the queen.
Perchance one scent have they; the star's o'erhead
Far, far exhales, the flower's at hand is shed.
Goddess of star, goddess of rose no less,
The Paphian flings o'er both her crimson dress.
Now had the moment passed wherein the brood
Of clustering buds seemed one twin sisterhood.
This flower, enlaced with leaves, shows naught but green;
That shoots a roseate streak from forth the screen:
One opes her pyramid and purple spire,
Emerging into plenitude of fire:
Another thrusts her verdant veil aside,
Counting her petals one by one with pride:
Expands her radiant cup of gorgeous hue,
And brings dense hidden veins of gold to view:
She who had burned erewhile, a flower of flame,
Now pales and droops her fainting head with shame:—

So that I mused how swift time steals all worth,
How roses age and wither with their birth;
Yea, while I speak, the flower with crimson crowned
Hath fallen and shed her glories on the ground.
So many births, forms, fates with changes fraught,
One day begins and one day brings to naught!
Grieve we that flowers should have so short a grace,
That Nature shows and steals her gifts apace?
Long as the day, so long the red rose lasts;
Eld following close on youth her beauty blasts:
That flower which Phosphor newly-born had known,
Hesper returning finds a wrinkled crone:
Yet well if, though some brief days past she die,
Her life be lengthened through posterity!
Pluck roses, girl, when flower, when youth is new,
Mindful the while that thus time flies for you.

These, then, are the two Latin sources which I wish to bring before the students of rose-literature in modern poetry. One of them is a passage from a marriage song by Catullus, the other an Idyll by Ausonius. I have next to show how, after the revival of letters, they were severally or in combination used by European poets. In this part of my task I shall not seek after exhaustiveness, but shall content myself with such specimens as occur readily to the memory.

I said that the Greek and Latin poets of a good period rarely used the rose as a symbol of human fragility. This requires some modification. The myths connected with flowers—hyacinth, narcissus, anemone—are themselves suggestive of sadness; but in these a god's beloved has become a plant which blooms each year with the recurring season. Therefore, this contemplation of the flower derives its sentiment rather from the promise of continuity and immortality in nature, than from the pathos of temporal decay. The rose, it may be parenthetically observed, in one version of the death of Adonis, was said to have sprung from his blood, the anemone from Aphrodite's tears.[1]

[1] Bion's "Lament for Adonis," 64—66. The lines are probably a late interpolation.

δάκρυα δ' ἁ Παφίη, τόσσ' ἐκχέει, ὅσσον Ἄδωνις
αἷμα χέει· τὰ δὲ πάντα ποτί χθονὶ γίγνεται ἄνθη.
αἷμα ῥόδον τίκτει, τὰ δὲ δάκρυα τὰν ἀνεμώναν.

Tears the Paphian shed, drop by drop for the drops of Adonis'
Blood, and on earth each drop, as it fell, grew into a blossom ;
Roses sprang from the blood, and the tears gave birth to the wind-flower.

Those beautiful similes, again, in which Homer and Virgil likened a young man stricken by death upon the battle-field to a poppy, or hyacinth, or olive broken from its stem, were symbols, not of the short prime of beauty, but of its sudden and unseasonable extinction ; nor was the rose, so far as I remember, employed even in this way. That was reserved for a modern poet, Ariosto, who compared the mouth of dying Zerbino to a waning rose.[1]

Languidetta come rosa,
Rosa non colta in sua stagione, sì ch' ella
Impallidisca in su la siepe ombrosa.

Languid like a rose,
A rose not plucked in her due season, so
That she must fade upon the dim hedgerows.

Yet two passages may be noticed in which poets of a good age compared the rose in her brief season to the fleeting loveliness of youth.[2]

καὶ τὸ ῥόδον καλόν ἐστι, καὶ ὁ χρόνος αὐτὸ μαραίνει·
καὶ τὸ ἴον καλόν ἐστιν ἐν εἴαρι, καὶ ταχὺ γηρᾷ·
καὶ κάλλος καλόν ἐστι τὸ παιδικόν, ἀλλ' ὀλίγον ζῇ.

Fair is the rose, but time consumes her flower ;
Fair the spring violet, but soon it fades ;
And fair is boyish beauty, but short-lived.

Ovid, perhaps with these lines in his memory, wrote as follows :[3]

[1] "Orl. Fur.," xxiv. 80.

[2] Theocritus, Idyll xxiii. 29. This Idyll is probably not by Theocritus, but by an imitator.

[3] "Ars Amandi," ii. 115.

Nec violæ semper, nec hiantia lilia florent ;
Et viget amissa spina relicta rosa.
Et tibi jam cani venient, formose, capilli ;
Jam venient rugæ quæ tibi corpus arent.

Not always violets nor lilies bloom ;
The sharp thorn bristles in the rose's room.
And thus for thee, fair boy, shall gray hairs grow,
While envious time delves wrinkles on thy brow.

I might also quote an epigram of Rufinus to Rhodocleia, in which he bids her bind blossoms on her brow, reminding her the while that :

ἀνθεῖς καὶ λήγεις καὶ σὺ καὶ ὁ στέφανος.

For time fades thee as he fades the roses ;
Nor they nor thou may revive again.

Such, before the date of Ausonius, were the slender contributions of classic poets to the pathos of rose-literature.

With the revival of letters in the fifteenth century, the passages from Catullus and Ausonius which I have chosen as the themes for my discourse fell like seeds on fertile soil in Italy, and bore abundant flowers of poetry, which spread their perfume, afterwards, through Europe. The melancholy which survived from mediævalism at that epoch, and the vivid interest in nature which characterised the Renaissance, combined to draw the attention of scholar-poets to the Idyll of Ausonius. This Idyll, or elegy, as it might better be called, reappears, but slightly altered, and with some distinctive additions, in the "Corinto" of Lorenzo de' Medici :

L' altra mattina in un mio piccolo orto
Andavo : e 'l sol sorgente con suoi rai
Uscía, non già ch io lo vedessi scorto.
Sonvi piantati dentro alcuni rosai ;
A quai rivolsi le mie vaghe ciglie
Per quel che visto non avevo mai.
Eranvi rose candide e vermiglie :
Alcuna a foglia a foglia al sol si spiega ;
Stretta prima, poi par s' apra scompiglie ;
Altra più giovinetta si dislega

Appena dalla boccia : eravi ancora
Chi le sue chiuse foglie all' aer niega ;
Altra cadendo a piè il terreno inflora.
Cosi le vidi nascere e morire
E passar lor vaghezza in men d' un' ora.
Quando languenti e pallide vidi ire
Le foglie a terra, allor mi venne a mente
Che vana cosa è il giovenil fiorire.
Ogni arbore ha i suoi fiori : e immantinente
Poi le tenere frondi al sol si piegano
Quando rinnovellar l' aere si sente.
I piccol frutti ancor informi allegano ;
Ch' a poco a poco talor tanto ingrossano,
Che pel gran peso i forti rami piegano,
Nè senza gran periglio portar possano
Il proprio peso ; appena regger sogliono
Crescendo, ad or ad ora se l' addossono.
Vien poi l' autunno, e maturi si cogliono
I dolci pomi : e passato il bel tempo,
Di fior di frutti e fronde al fin si spogliono.
Cogli la rosa, o ninfa, or ch' è il bel tempo.

I will give my own English version of this piece :

Into a little close of mine I went
One morning, when the sun with his fresh light
Was rising all refulgent and unshent.
Rose-trees are planted there in order bright,
Whereto I turned charmed eyes, and long did stay,
Taking my fill of that new-found delight.
Red and white roses bloomed upon the spray ;
One opened, leaf by leaf, to greet the morn,
Shyly at first, then in sweet disarray ;
Another, yet a youngling, newly born,
Scarce struggled from the bud, and there were some
Whose petals closed them from the air forlorn ;
Another fell, and showered the grass with bloom ;
Thus I beheld the roses dawn and die,
And one short hour their loveliness consume.
But while I watched those languid petals lie
Colourless on cold earth, I could but think
How vain a thing is youthful bravery.
Trees have their time to bloom on winter's brink ;
Then the rathe blossoms wither in an hour,
When the brief days of spring toward summer sink ;
The fruit, as yet unformed, is tart and sour ;

Little by little it grows large, and weighs
The strong boughs down with slow persistent power;
Nor without peril can the branches raise
Their burden; now they stagger 'neath the weight
Still growing, and are bent above the ways;
Soon autumn comes, and the ripe, ruddy freight
Is gathered: the glad season will not stay;
Flowers, fruit, and leaves are now all desolate.
Pluck the rose, therefore, maiden, while 'tis May!

Here we have the *Collige virgo rosas*, "Gather ye roses while ye may," translated from the autumn of antique to the April of modern poetry, and that note is echoed through all the love-literature of the Renaissance. Lorenzo, be it observed, has followed his model, not only in the close, but also in the opening of the passage. Side by side with this Florentine transcript from Ausonius I will now place Poliziano's looser, but more poetical handling of the same theme, subjoining my version of his ballata.

I' mi trovai, fanciulle, un bel mattino
Di mezzo maggio in un verde giardino.
Eran d' intorno violette e gigli
Fra l' erba verde, e vaghi fior novelli,
Azurri gialli candidi e vermigli:
Ond' io porsi la mano a cor di quelli
Per adornar e' mie' biondi capelli
E cinger di grillanda el vago crino.
I' mi trovai, etc.

Ma poi ch' i' ebbi pien di fiori un lembo,
Vidi le rose e non pur d' un colore:
Io corsi allor per empier tutto el grembo,
Perch' era si soave il loro odore
Che tutto mi senti' destar el core
Di dolce voglia e d' un piacer divino.
I' mi trovai, etc.

I' posi mente: quelle rose allora,
Mai non vi potre' dir quant' eran belle:
Quale scoppiava della boccia ancora;
Qual' erano un po' passe e qual novelle.
Amor mi disse allor:—Va' cô' di quelle
Che più vedi fiorite in sullo spino.
I' mi trovai, etc.

Quando la rosa ogni suo' foglia spande,
Quando è più bella, quando è più gradita ;
Allora è buona a mettere in ghirlande,
Prima che sua belleza sia fuggita :
Sicchè, fanciulle, mentre è più fiorita,
Cogliàn la bella rosa del giardino.
I' mi trovai, etc.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

Violets and lilies grew on every side
Mid the green grass, and young flowers wonderful,
Golden, and white, and red, and azure-eyed ;
Toward which I stretched my hands, eager to pull
Plenty to make my fair curls beautiful,
To crown my rippling curls with garlands gay.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

But when my lap was full of flowers I spied
Roses at last, roses of every hue ;
Therefore I ran to pluck their ruddy pride,
Because their perfume was so sweet and true
That all my soul went forth with pleasure new,
With yearning and desire too soft to say.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

I gazed and gazed. Hard task it were to tell
How lovely were the roses in that hour :
One was but peeping from her verdant shell,
And some were faded, some were scarce in flower.
Then Love said : Go, pluck from the blooming bower
Those that thou seest ripe upon the spray.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

For when the full rose quits her tender sheath,
When she is sweetest and most fair to see,
Then is the time to place her in thy wreath,
Before her beauty and her freshness flee.
Gather ye therefore roses with great glee,
Sweet girls, or e'er their perfume pass away.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

Much might be written about the different styles in which Lorenzo de' Medici and Poliziano severally treated the theme suggested to them by Ausonius. Lorenzo is minute in detail, sober in reflection; Poliziano employs slighter touches with an airier grace and freer flight of fancy. The one produces a careful study from nature by the light of his classical model; the other sings a new song, soaring high above the beaten track of imitation. The description of the rose-garden, of the roses in their several degrees of expansion, and the concluding moral, have been all etherealised in the ballata. But space forbids me to enter into further critical particulars.

Before quitting Poliziano, I will collect a few passages from his poems which seem to be derived from the same source of Latin inspiration. In his "Giostra" (lib. i., st. 78) he thus describes the rose:

> Ma vie più lieta più ridente e bella
> Ardisce aprire il seno al sol la rosa:
> Questa di verde gemma s' incappella:
> Quella si mostra allo sportel vezzosa;
> L' altra che 'n dolce foco ardea pur ora
> Languida cade e il bel pratello infiora.

This pretty little picture may be said to represent the three ages of the rose. Though I cannot do justice to the original, these verses may be accepted as a bad copy of a graceful miniature:

> Trembles the virgin violet in air,
> With downcast eyes that seem love's sight to shun;
> But far more glad, more smiling, and more fair,
> The rose expands her bosom to the sun;
> This bud in verdant wreaths her head doth bear;
> That opes her half-blown petals one by one;
> And she who erewhile flames of love displayed,
> Drooping declines, and strews with bloom the glade.

In the "Orfeo" he paraphrased the admonition of the last lines of the Idyll thus:

Digli, zampogna mia, come via fugge
Cogli anni insieme la belleza snella ;
E digli come il tempo ne distrugge,
Nè l' età persa mai si rinnovella :
Digli che sappi usar suo' forma bella,
Chè sempre mai non saran rose e viole.

Or, as follows in English :

Nay, tell her, pipe of mine, how swift doth flee
Beauty together with our years amain ;
Tell her how time destroys all rarity,
Nor youth once lost can be renewed again ;
Tell her to use the gifts that yet remain ;
Roses and violets blossom not alway.

To this refrain of *Collige virgo rosas* he is for ever returning :

Deh, non insuperbir per tuo' belleza,
Dama ; ch' un breve tempo te la fura.
Canuta tornerà la bionda treza
Che del bel viso adorna la figura.
Mentre che il fiore è nella sua vagheza,
Coglilo ; che belleza poco dura.
Fresca è la rosa da mattina, e a sera
Ell' ha perduto suo' belleza altera.

Nay, be not overproud of thy great grace,
Lady ! for brief time is thy thief and mine.
White will he turn those golden curls that lace
Thy forehead and thy cheeks so marble-fine.
Lo ! while the flower still flourisheth apace,
Pluck it ; for beauty but awhile doth shine.
Fair is the rose at dawn ; but long ere night
Her freshness fades, her pride hath vanished quite.

Thus Florentine poets used the rose as a reminder to girls that they should enjoy their youth in season. The graver simile of Catullus was not to their purpose. It first makes its entrance into Italian poetry in these stanzas of Ariosto, which are closely copied from the Latin :[1]

La verginella è simile alla rosa,
Ch' in bel giardin su la nativa spina

[1] "Orl. Fur.," i. 42, 43.

Mentre sola e sicura si riposa,
Nè gregge nè pastor se le avvicina ;
L' aura soave e l' alba rugiadosa,
L' acqua, la terra, al suo favor s' inchina :
Giovani vaghi e dame innamorate
Amano averne e seni e tempie ornate.

Ma non sí tosto dal materno stelo
Rimossa viene, dal suo ceppo verde,
Che quanto avea dagli uomini e dal cielo
Favor, grazia, e belleza, tutto perde.
La vergine che 'l fior, di che piú zelo
Che de' begli occhi e della vita aver dè,
Lascia altrui côrre, il pregio ch' avea innante
Perde nel cor di tutti gli altri amanti.

The translation made by Rose of the "Orlando Furioso" shall here be quoted :

The virgin has her image in the rose
Sheltered in garden on its native stock,
Which there in solitude and safe repose
Blooms, unapproached by shepherd or by flock.
For this earth teems, and freshening water flows,
And breeze and dewy dawn their sweets unlock ;
With such the wistful youth his bosom dresses,
With such the enamoured damsel braids her tresses.

But wanton hands no sooner this displace
From the maternal stem, where it had grown,
Than all was withered ; whatsoever grace
It found with man or heaven ; bloom, beauty gone.
The damsel who should hold in higher place
Than light or life the flower which is her own,
Suffering the spoiler's hand to crop the prize,
Forfeits her worth in every other's eyes.

Thus far I have traced the separate working of the two themes in Lorenzo de' Medici's, Poliziano's, and Ariosto's poetry. Tasso, while expanding in the main the motive of Ausonius, borrows one touch from Catullus in the following famous passage of the "Gerusalemme Liberata" :[1]

[1] Canto xvi. 15.

Deh ! mira, egli canto, spuntar la rosa
Dal verde suo modesta e verginella,

Che mezzo aperta ancora e mezzo ascosa
Quanto si mostra men tanto è più bella.
Ecco poi nudo il sen già baldanzosa
Dispiega ; ecco poi langue e non par quella ;
Quella non par, che desiata avanti.
Fu da mille donzelle e mille amanti.

Cosi trapassa al trapassar d' un giorno
Della vita mortale il fiore e il verde :
Nè perchè faccia indietro april ritorno,
Si rinfiora ella mai nè si rinverde.
Cogliam la rosa in sul mattino adorno
Di questo dì, che tosto il seren perde ;
Cogliam d' amor la rosa ; amiamo or quando
Esser si puote riamato amando.

A translation made by Thomas Bayley from these stanzas shall be given, instead of any other, because it has been chosen by Mrs. Boyle in her book :[1]

Mark ye (he sings) in modest maiden guise
The red rose peeping from her leafy nest ;
Half opening, now half closed, the jewel lies,
More bright her beauty seems the more represt.

But lo ! with bosom bared, the vaunting flower
Now droops, now dies, alas ! how changed the while,
From that sweet rose that wooed, in happier hour,
The young man's homage and the maiden's smile.

Thus, in the passing of a day, the flower,
The freshness of man's little life is o'er,
Though April skies return with sun and shower,
The flower may bloom not, life return no more.

Cull, then, the rose, for night is coming ; haste
While o'er its leaves the matin dew is poured ;
Cull, then, the rose of love while yet thou mayest
Living be loved—adoring be adored.

Notwithstanding many pretty and ingenious turns, this version is obviously imperfect through not following the metre of the original. And Mrs. Boyle might have done well

[1] "Ros Rosarum," p. 68.

to use the two stanzas in which Fairfax availed himself of Spenser's splendid paraphrase. Those who are curious in subtle points of translation should consult a letter which appeared not long ago in the *Academy* upon the various renderings of Tasso's song. The writer of that letter put together with much skill one version, combining the best portions of all.

Before leaving Italy for the North, let us see how Guarini handled the rose bequeathed to him from Catullus and Ausonius by Lorenzo de' Medici, Poliziano, Ariosto, and Tasso. Amarilli, the heroine of the "Pastor Fido," has been betrothed, for high reasons of state, to Silvio, a young hunter, who has no mind for marriage; and her father is naturally anxious lest a long engagement in these circumstances should prove the ruin of her happiness. He uses this beautiful, but somewhat too artificial, expansion of the Catullian theme, combined with Ariosto's simile of Zerbino's death, for the expression of his uneasiness:

Come in vago giardin rosa gentile
Che nelle verdi sue tenere spoglie
Pure dianzi era rinchiusa,
E sotto l' ombra del notturno velo
Incolta e sconosciuta
Stava, posando in sul materno stelo;
Al subito apparir del primo raggio,
Che spunti in Oriente,
Si desta e si risente,
E scopre al sol, che la vagheggia e mira,
Il suo vermiglio ed odorato seno,
Dov' ape susurrando
Nei mattutini albori
Vola, suggendo i rugiadosi umori;
Ma s' allor non si coglie,
Sicchè del mezzodì senta le fiamme,
Cade al cader del sole
Sì scolorita in sulla siepe ombrosa,
Ch' appena si può dir: questa fu rosa.
Così la verginella,
Mentre cura materna

La custodisce e chiude,
Chiude anch' ella il suo petto
All' amoroso affetto ;
Ma se lascivo sguardo
Di cupido amator vien che la miri,
E n' oda ella i sospiri,
Gli apre subito il core,
E nel tenero sen riceve amore :
E se vergogna il cela,
O temenza l' affrena,
La misera, tacendo,
Per soverchio desio tutto si strugge.
Così manca beltà se 'l foco dura,
E perdendo stagion perde ventura.

In the following translation I have attempted to render the effect of those partly-rhymed and carefully-rhythmed lyrics, which Italian poets used in their dramatic work, and which Milton adopted from them in his choruses of *Samson Agonistes :*

As on fair garden lawns a gentle rose,
Who, lapped in tender sheaths of budding green,
Erewhile was shut from view,
And 'neath the shadow of night's sheltering hem,
Uncultured and unknown,
Abode in peace on the maternal stem,
With the first sudden beams that spring
O'er the dim East and day reveal,
Starts into life, begins to feel,
And opens to the sun's admiring gaze
Her crimson bosom laden with perfume,
Where the deep humming bee,
Bathed in cool light of morn,
Goes sucking honey-dews of darkness born ;
But, if none pluck her then,
If she but feel the fiery shafts of noon,
Falls with the falling of the sun,
So all discoloured on the dim hedgerows
That one can scarcely say : " This was a rose ! "
E'en thus the girl,
What time a mother's care
Wards her frail flower and guards,
Guards also her own breast
From love and love's unrest ;
But if the wanton gaze

Of amorous lover chance on her to turn,
If she but hear his sighs that yearn,
She opens out her heart
And to her tender bosom takes love in;
Then should shame hide her smart,
Or fear her will restrain,
The child in speechless pain
Through too much longing must decline and part.
Thus beauty fades, if the fire burneth long;
And time's delay doth work her grievous wrong.

The extreme subtlety and rhetorical minuteness with which this image is wrought somewhat impair its pictorial power. But we must remember that this effect was calculated for an audience sensitive to the cadences of rhythmical declamation in the age which had invented modern music. For them "the linkèd sweetness long drawn out" of Guarini's verbal melody had a peculiar charm. In order to show how poets can employ similar natural suggestions to point opposite lessons, let us set Guarini's "all discoloured" rose beside Shakespeare's

Pale primroses,
That die unmarried ere they can behold
Bright Phœbus in his strength, a malady
Most incident to maids.

Finally, notice how Shakespeare puts the central thought of Guarini, when he chooses, into a single phrase:

She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek.

Here the word damask brings the rose before us, as a little earlier in *Twelfth-Night* the Duke gives the old analogy between the rose and woman's beauty in a couplet:

For women are as roses, whose fair flower,
Being once displayed, doth fall that very hour.

It is now time to trace the influence of the Catullian and Ausonian motives over English and French poetry. Spenser's

magnificent paraphrase from Tasso follows the original closely, but omits, whether intentionally or not, to dwell upon the line derived through Ariosto from Catullus.[1]

> The whiles some one did chaunt this lovely lay :
> Ah ! see, whoso fair thing dost fain to see,
> In springing flower the image of the day.
> Ah ! see the Virgin Rose, how sweetly she
> Doth first peep forth with bashful modesty,
> That fairer seems the less ye see her may.
> Lo, see soon after how more bold and free
> Her barèd bosom she doth broad display ;
> Lo, see soon after how she fades and falls away.
>
> So passeth, in the passing of a day,
> Of mortal life the leaf, the bud, the flower ;
> Ne more doth flourish after first decay,
> That erst was sought to deck both bed and bower
> Of many a lady and many a paramour.
> Gather therefore the rose whilst yet in prime,
> For soon comes age that will her pride deflower :
> Gather the rose of love whilst yet is time,
> Whilst loving thou mayst lovèd be with equal crime.

It so happens that none of the pieces which I have hitherto presented in this essay, with the exception of Tasso's stanzas and Bayley's version of them, occur in Mrs. Boyle's book. This does not prove the poverty of her anthology, but the extraordinary richness of rose-literature. In tracing the influence of Ausonius and Catullus upon modern poetry, I shall, from this point forward, be able to refer to the pages of "Ros Rosarum." Ronsard's sonnet, "Comme on voit sur la branche," is interesting, as a somewhat faithful study from Catullus ; but the maiden rose for whom he wrote it, had been cropped by death, not by dishonour.[2] His more celebrated lyric, "Mignonne, allez voir si la rose," which has been so elegantly translated by Mr. Andrew Lang, refines upon the motive of Ausonius.[3] Here, in the French "Cueillez, cueillez votre jeunesse," we recognise the Latin *Collige virgo rosam.*

[1] "Faery Queen," ii., xii., 74, 75.
[2] "Ros Rosarum," p. 78.
[3] Ibid., p. 79.

In another sonnet Ronsard renders the leading theme of the same idyll thus :[1]

Un soleil voit naître et mourir la Rose.

When we turn to English poetry, we find in Samuel Daniel's sonnet, "Look, Delia," a pretty close rendering of Tasso's stanzas.[2] William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, applied the metaphor of the rose to the waning of human life, without any particular reference to youthful beauty.[3] But the dominant note sounds again in Herrick's incomparable "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," and in Waller's graceful "Go, lovely Rose."[4] For a final touch I will transcribe a little fragment of Herrick's. It occurs in a poem which was borrowed straight from the lines of Theocritus quoted above (p. 374):[5]

This to your coyness I will tell;
And having spoke it once, farewell.
The lily will not long endure,
Nor the snow continue pure;
The rose, the violet, one day
Sees both these lady flowers decay,
And you must fade as well as they.

If I am right in reading "sees" in the last line but one, then even here, too, we have a reminiscence of the Ausonian idyll.

From the analysis which I have partly made and partly suggested in the foregoing pages, it will be seen how much modern poetry owes to now almost neglected sources in antique literature, and with what varied gracefulness of new life the singers of the past four centuries invested themes which they derived from scholarship. Other students, who have traversed different fields of European poetry, will probably be able to complete the pedigree which I have endeavoured to establish in its main outlines from Ausonius to Waller.

[1] Ibid., p. 80. [2] Ibid., p. 119.
[3] Ibid., p. 138. [4] Ibid., pp. 147, 150.
[5] "Ros Rosarum," p. 148. It is from "The Cruel Maid."

A COMPARISON OF ELIZABETHAN WITH VICTORIAN POETRY.

I.

ENGLISH literature, under the Tudors and the first king of the house of Stuart, owed much of its unexampled richness to a felicitous combination of circumstances. Feudalism had received a mortal wound in the Wars of the Roses, and was dying. The people came to knowledge of itself, and acquired solidity during the reigns of Henry VII., Henry VIII., and Elizabeth. Englishmen were brought into the fellowship of European nations through Wolsey's audacious diplomacy. They began to feel their force as an important factor, which had henceforth to be reckoned with in peace or war. Grave perils attended the formation of Great Britain into a separate and self-sustaining integer of Europe; nor was it until the Protectorate that these islands made their full weight recognised. None of the perils, however, which shook England during the period of consolidation, sufficed to disturb the equilibrium of government and social order. On the other hand, they stimulated patriotism, and braced the nation with a sense of its own dignity. Our final rupture with Rome, after the trials of Queen Mary's reign were over, satisfied the opinion of a large majority. Our collision with Spain, in the crisis marked by the Armada, took a turn which filled the population with reverent and religious enthusiasm. These two decisive passages in English history promoted the pride of the race, and inspired it with serious ardour. Instead of

weakening the Crown or the Church, they had the effect of rendering both necessary to the nation. Then, when Scotland was united to England and Ireland, at the accession of James, a disciplined and nobly expansive people thought themselves for a moment on the pinnacle of felicity.

While the English were thus becoming a powerful and self-conscious nation, those intellectual changes which divided the mediæval from the modern period, and which we know by the names of Renaissance and Reformation, took place. It is a peculiarity of this transition time in our islands, that what used to be called "the new learning," with its new theories of education, its new way of regarding nature, and its new conceptions of human life, was introduced simultaneously with the Reformation. Italy had accomplished the Revival of Learning; Germany had revolted against Catholicism. France had felt both movements unequally and partially, amid the confusion of civil wars and the clash of contending sects. Italy, after the Tridentine Council, was relapsing into reactionary dulness. Germany was dismembered by strifes and schisms. France underwent the throes of a passionate struggle, which subordinated the intellectual aspects of both Renaissance and Reformation to political interest. England alone, meanwhile, enjoyed the privilege of receiving that twofold influx of the modern spirit without an overwhelming strain upon her vital forces. The Marian persecution was severe enough to test the bias of the people, and to remind them of the serious points at issue, without rending society to its foundations. Humanism reached our shores when its first enthusiasms—enthusiasms which seemed in Italy to have brought again the gods and vices of the pagan past—had tempered their delirium. We have only to compare men like More, Ascham, Colet, Buchanan, Camden, Cheke, the pioneers of our Renaissance, with Filelfo, Poggio, Poliziano, Pontano, in order to perceive how far more sober and healthy was the tone of the new learning in Great Britain than in Italy.

In this connection it is worthy of notice that humanism, before it moulded the minds of the English, had already permeated Italian and French literature. Classical erudition had been adapted to the needs of modern thought. Antique authors had been collected, printed, annotated, and translated. They were fairly mastered in the south, and assimilated to the style of the vernacular. By these means much of the learning popularised by our poets, essayists, and dramatists came to us at second-hand, and bore the stamp of contemporary genius. In like manner, the best works of Italian, French, Spanish, and German literature were introduced into Great Britain together with the classics. The age favoured translation, and English readers, before the close of the sixteenth century, were in possession of a cosmopolitan library in their mother tongue, including choice specimens of ancient and modern masterpieces.

These circumstances sufficiently account for the richness and variety of Elizabethan literature. They also help to explain two points which must strike every student of that literature—its native freshness, and its marked unity of style.

Elizabethan literature was fresh and native, because it was the utterance of a youthful race, aroused to vigorous self-consciousness under conditions which did not depress or exhaust its energies. The English opened frank eyes upon the discovery of the world and man, which had been effected by the Renaissance. They were not wearied with collecting, collating, correcting, transmitting to the press. All the hard work of assimilating the humanities had been done for them. They had only to survey and to enjoy, to feel and to express, to lay themselves open to delightful influences, to con the noble lessons of the past, to thrill beneath the beauty and the awe of an authentic revelation. Criticism had not laid its cold, dry finger on the blossoms of the fancy. The new learning was still young enough to be a thing of wonder and entrancing joy. To absorb it sufficed. Like the blood made

in the veins of a growing man by strong meat and sound wine, it coursed to the brain and created a fine frenzy. That was a period of bright ideas, stimulating creative faculty, animating the people with hope and expectation, undimmed, untarnished by the corrosion of the analytic reason. "Nobly wild, not mad," the adolescent giants of that age, Marlowe and Raleigh, Spenser and Shakespeare, broke into spontaneous numbers, charged with the wisdom and the passion of the ages fused in a divine clairvoyance.

Elizabethan literature has a marked unity of style. We notice a strong generic similarity in those poets which veils their specific differences. That is perhaps the first and most salient point of contrast between Elizabethan and Victorian literature. It makes a cautious critic pause. After the lapse of two centuries, he asks himself, will Byron, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Landor, Tennyson, Campbell, William Morris, Rogers, Swinburne, Clough, Rossetti, Browning, Mrs. Browning, Matthew Arnold, and the rest of them, seem singing to one dominant tune, in spite of their so obvious differences? Will our posterity discern in them the note in common which we find in Sidney, Herrick, Spenser, Shakespeare, Fletcher, Marlowe, Jonson, Barnfield, Dekker, Marston, Chapman, Raleigh, Drayton, Drummond, Webster, and the rest of those great predecessors? The question has to be asked; but the answer is not easily given. We can neither reject ourselves into the past, nor project ourselves into the future, with certainty sufficient to decide whether what looks like similarity in the Elizabethan poets, and what looks like diversity in the Victorian poets, are illusions of the present.

Yet something can be attempted in explanation of the apparent puzzle. The circumstances of the Elizabethan age favoured unity of style. The language, to begin with, had recently been remade under the influence of new ideals and new educational systems. Far more than lapse of years and wastes of desolating warfare separated sixteenth-

century English from the speech of Chaucer. The spirit itself, which shapes language to the use of mind, had changed through the action of quickening conceptions and powerfully excited energies. And to this change in the spirit the race was eagerly responsive. In a certain way all writers felt the Bible, Greece, Rome, Italy, France, Germany; all strove to be in tune with the new learning. At the same time, criticism was hardly in its cradle; you find a trace of it in Jonson, Bacon, Selden, Camden; but it does not touch the general. The people were anything but analytical, and poetry issued from the very people's hearts, as melody from the strings of the violoncello. The spontaneity which we have already noted as a main mark of Elizabethan utterance, led thus to unity of style. The way in which classical masterpieces were then studied, conduced to the same result. Those perennial sources of style were enjoyed in their entirety, absorbed, assimilated, reproduced with freedom. They were not closely scrutinised, examined with the microscope, studied with the view of emphasizing this or that peculiarity a single critic found in them. And the same holds good about contemporary foreign literatures. Everything which these literatures contained was grist for the English mill: not models to be copied, but stuff to be used.

Now compare the intellectual conditions of the Victorian age. Take language first. Instead of having no literary past, except Chaucer, Skelton, the English Bible, and Sir Thomas Malory behind our backs, we have the long self-conscious period between Dryden and Byron, during which our mother tongue was carefully elaborated upon a definite system. Victorian poetry has to reckon with Elizabethan poetry and the poetry of Queen Anne—for English people call their epochs by the names of queens. This constitutes at the outset a great difference, making for diversity in style. A writer has more models to choose from, more openings for the exercise of his personal predilections. And the mental attitude has

altered also. We are highly conscious of our aims, profoundly analytical. All study of literature has become critical and comparative. The scientific spirit makes itself powerfully felt in the domain of art. It is impossible for people of the present to be as fresh and native as the Elizabethans were. Such a mighty stream, *novies Styx interfusa*, in the shape of accumulated erudition, grave national experiences, spirit-quelling doubts, insurgent philosophies, and all too aching pressing facts and fears, divides the men of this time from the men of that. It is enough now to have indicated these points. The argument will return to some of them in detail. For the moment we may safely assert that a prominent note of Elizabethan as distinguished from Victorian literature is unity of tone, due to the felicitous circumstances of the nation in that earlier period.

II.

What, then, is the characteristic of Elizabethan poetry? I think the answer to this question lies in the words—freedom, adolescence, spontaneity; mainly freedom. The writers of that age were free from the bondage to great names, Virgil or Cicero or Seneca. They owned no allegiance to great languages, like the Latin; to famous canons of taste, like the Aristotelian unities; to scholastic authority and academical prescription. They were politically and socially free, adoring the majesty of England in the person of their sovereign, and flattering a national ideal when they burned poetic incense to Elizabeth. That strain of servility which jars upon our finer sense in the romantic epics of Ariosto and Tasso, is wholly absent from "The Faery Queen." They were notably free in all that appertains to religion. Where but in England could a playwright have used words at once so just and so bold as these of Dekker?

> The best of men
> That e'er wore earth about him, was a sufferer—
> A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit:
> The first true gentleman that ever breathed.

A delicate taste can hardly be offended by this reference to Christ, and yet we feel that it could not have been made except in an age of undisputed liberty. Their freedom was the freedom of young strength, untrammelled energies, with El Dorado in the western main, and boundless regions for the mind to traverse. This makes their touch on truth and goodness and beauty so right, so natural, so unerring. They have the justice of perception, the clarity of vision, the cleanliness of feeling which belong to generous and healthy manhood in its earliest prime. The consequence of this freedom was that each man in that age wrote what he thought best, wrote out of himself, and sang spontaneously. He had no fear of academies, of censorship, of critical coteries, of ecclesiastical censure, before his eyes. How different in this respect was the liberty of Shakespeare from the servitude of Tasso. At the same time, as we have already seen, this spontaneity was controlled by a strong sense of national unity. The English were possessed with an ideal, which tuned their impassioned utterances to one keynote. The spirit of the people was patriotic, highly moralised, intensely human, animated by a robust belief in reality; martial, yet jealous of domestic peace; assiduous in toil, yet quick to overleap material obstacles and revel in the dreams of the imagination; manly, but delicate; inured to hardship, but not quelled as yet by disappointment and the disillusion of experience. In a word, Elizabethan poetry is the utterance of "a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks . . . . like an eagle muing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam."

Freedom being thus the dominant note of Elizabethan poetry, it follows that the genius of the race will return to it with love and admiration at epochs marked by the resurgent spirit of liberty. This is why the literature of the Victorian age has been so powerfully influenced by that of Elizabeth.

The French Revolution shook Europe to the centre, and opened illimitable vistas at the commencement of the century. In 1815, England, after her long struggle with Napoleon, stood crowned with naval and military laurels, in possession of a hardly-earned peace. It is not to be wondered that critics like Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, editors like Gifford, historians like Collier, should have ransacked the forgotten treasures of the Shakespearian drama at this moment. Poetry aimed at Elizabethan phraseology and used Elizabethan metres. Byron adapted the Spenserian and octave stanzas to his purposes of satire and description; Keats and Shelley treated the heroic couplet with Elizabethan laxity of structure and variety of cadence; Wordsworth and Coleridge revived the Elizabethan rhythms of blank verse. The sonnet was cultivated, and lyrical measures assumed bewildering forms of richness. At the same time, a revolt began against those canons of taste which had prevailed in the last century. Wordsworth denounced conventional poetic diction; it savoured of literary treason to profess a particular partiality for Pope; fancy was preferred to sense, exuberance of imagery to chastened style, audacity of invention to logic and correctness.

This return to Elizabethanism has marked the whole course of Victorian poetry. But times are changed, and we ourselves are changed in them. The men of this century have never recaptured "the first fine careless rapture" of the sixteenth century. What were dreams then, have become sober expectations. Instead of El Dorado we have conquered California, the gold-fields of Australia, the diamond mines of South Africa. Between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries North America was won and lost; East India was gained by heroism and adventure worthy of a Drake and Raleigh; and now the crown of that vast empire on the forehead of our Queen weighs heavy with the sense of serious responsibilities. The English race is no longer adolescent; we cannot model

our national genius like a beautiful young hero rejoicing in his naked strength and scattering armies by his shout: the sculptor who did so would forget the years which have ploughed wrinkles on that hero's forehead, the steam-engines which are his chariot, the ironclad navies which waft him over ocean, the electricity which plays like lightning in his eyes. Victorian poets cannot be spontaneous in the same sense as our ancestors were. Like Iago, they are nothing if not critical. Science has imposed on them her burden of analysis, and though science reveals horizons far beyond the dreams of Bacon, it fills the soul with something well-nigh kin to hopelessness. Man shrinks before the Universe. We have lived through so much; we have seen so many futile philosophies rise like mushrooms and perish; we have tried so many political experiments, and listened to so many demagogues of various complexions, that a world-fatigue has penetrated deep into our spirit. The masterpiece of the century is Goethe's *Faust*, and its hero suffers from the *Welt-schmerz*. A simple faith in God and the Bible yields to critical inquiry, comparative theology, doubts and difficulties of all kinds. Religious liberty in this age consists more in the right to disbelieve as we think best than to believe according to our conscience. Pessimism, already strong in Byron, has grown and gathered strength with introspection until we find it lurking in nearly all the sincerest utterances of the present. We are oppressed with social problems which admit of no solution, due to the vast increase of our population, to the industrial changes which have turned England from an agricultural into a manufacturing country, to the unequal distribution of wealth, the development of huge, hideous towns, the seething multitudes of vicious and miserable paupers which they harbour. We watch the gathering of revolutionary storm-clouds, hear the grumbling of thunder in the distance, and can only sit meanwhile in darkness—so gigantic and unmanageable are the forces now in labour for some mighty birth of time. Who

can be optimistic under these conditions? "Merry England" sounds like a mockery now. Instead of merry England the Victorian poet has awful, earnest, grimly menacing London to sing in. His temptation, especially in the third period of our century, is to retire from the world into an artificial paradise of art, and there, among exotic fragrances and foreign airs, to seek a refuge from the sombre problems forced upon him by the actualities of life. These things were not felt so much at the beginning of the century; they are bringing it to a close in sadness and strong searchings of soul.

III.

Elizabethan genius found its main expression in the drama. No epic worthy of the name was produced in the sixteenth century, for Spenser's "Faery Queen" has not the right to be so styled. But every great national epoch which attains to utterance through art has a specific clairvoyance, and England in the age we call Elizabethan was clairvoyant for the drama; that is to say, men wrought with an unerring instinct in this field, and the lesser talents were lifted into the sphere of the greater when they entered it. After the drama, and closely associated with it, came those songs for music in which the English of the sixteenth century excelled. The lyric rapture, that which has been called the lyric cry, penetrates all verbal music of that period. We find it modulating blank verse and controlling the rhythms of the couplet and the stanza. The best subsidiary work of the age consisted of translations, adaptations, and free handlings of antique themes in narrative verse. Chapman's "Homer," Fairfax's "Tasso," Marlowe's "Hero and Leander," Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" and the "Rape of Lucrece," rank among the masterpieces of Elizabethan poetry. But drama and song, when all accounts are settled, remain the crowning glories of that literature.

The Victorian age can boast no national drama. Poetical

plays have indeed been produced which do credit to the talents of their authors.[1] Yet the century has not expressed its real stuff, nor shown its actual clairvoyance in that line. We cannot point to a Victorian drama as we do to an Elizabethan drama, and challenge the world to match it. This is due perhaps in part to those incalculable changes which have substituted the novel for the drama. The public of the present time is a public of readers rather than of hearers, and the muster-roll of brilliant novelists, from Scott and Jane Austen, through Thackeray and Dickens, down to George Eliot and George Meredith, can be written off against the playwrights of the sixteenth century. Poetry, surveyed from a sufficient altitude, claims these imaginative makers, though they used the vehicle of prose. Even less than the sixteenth has the nineteenth produced an epic, and for similar reasons. Tennyson chose the right name for his Arthurian string of studies when he called them "Idylls of the King." To claim for them epical coherence was only a brilliant afterthought. It is not given to any race under the conditions of conscious culture to create a genuine epic. That rare flower of art puts forth its bloom in the first dawn of national existence. If we except the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey," how few real epics does the human race possess! The German "Nibelungen Lied" is a late *rifacimento* of Scandinavian sagas. Sir Thomas Malory's "Morte d'Arthur," our nearest approach to a true epic, is the digest of a score of previous romances. The "Song of Roland" is an epical lyric. We call the "Æneid" an epic because it throbs with the sense of Rome. *Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem.* We call the "Divine Comedy" an epic because it embalms the spirit of the Middle Ages at their close; we call "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" epics because they carry such a weight of meaning

[1] Darley, Landor, Beddoes, Horne, Procter, Shelley, Browning, Taylor, Swinburne, and possibly Tennyson, demand commemoration in a footnote.

and are so monumentally constructed. But the "Æneid," the "Divine Comedy," and Milton's "Paradise" are not epics in the proper sense of the word; they are the products of reflection and individual genius, not the self-expression of a nation in its youth. And just as the novel has absorbed our forces for the drama, so has it satisfied our thirst for epical narration. In that hybrid form where poetry assumes the garb of prose, both drama and epic for the modern world lie embedded.

What, then, are the specific channels of Victorian utterance in verse? To define them is difficult, because they are so subtly varied and so inextricably interwoven. Yet I think they may be superficially described as the idyll and the lyric. Under the idyll I should class all narrative and descriptive poetry, of which this age has been extraordinarily prolific; sometimes assuming the form of minstrelsy, as in the lays of Scott; sometimes approaching to the classic style, as in the Hellenics of Landor; sometimes rivalling the novelette, as in the work of Tennyson; sometimes aiming at psychological analysis, as in the portraits drawn by Robert Browning; sometimes confining art to bare history, as in Crabbe; sometimes indulging flights of pure artistic fancy, as in Keats' "Endymion" and "Lamia." Under its many metamorphoses the narrative and descriptive poetry of our century bears the stamp of the idyll, because it is fragmentary and because it results in a picture. Here it inclines to the drama, here it borrows tone from the epic; in one place it is lyrical, in another it is didactic; fancy has presided over the birth of this piece, reflection has attended the production of that. But in each case the artist has seen his subject within narrow compass, treated that as a complete whole, and given to the world a poem in the narrative and descriptive style, reminding us of the epic in its general form, of the drama or the lyric in its particular treatment. Those who have read the technical lessons which the idylls of Theocritus convey, will understand why I classify this exuberant

jungle of Victorian poetry under the common title of idyll.

No literature and no age has been more fertile of lyric poetry than English literature in the age of Victoria. The fact is apparent. I should superfluously burden my readers if I were to prove the point by reference to Byron, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, Rossetti, Clough, Swinburne, Arnold, Tennyson, and I do not know how many of less illustrious but splendid names, in detail. The causes are not far to seek. Without a comprehensive vehicle like the epic, which belongs to the first period of national life, or the drama, which belongs to its secondary period, our poets of a later day have had to sing from their inner selves, subjectively, introspectively, obeying impulses from nature and the world, which touched them not as they were Englishmen, but as they were this man or that woman. They had no main current of literature wherein to plunge themselves, and cry: "Ma naufragar m' è dolce in questo mar."[1] They could not forego what made them individuals; tyrannous circumstances of thought and experience rendered their sense of personality too acute. When they sang, they sang with their particular voice; and the lyric is the natural channel for such song. But what a complex thing is this Victorian lyric! It includes Wordsworth's sonnets and Rossetti's ballads, Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" and Keats' odes, Clough's "Easter Day" and Tennyson's "Maud," Swinburne's "Songs before Sunrise" and Browning's "Dramatis Personæ," Thomson's "City of Dreadful Night" and Mary Robinson's "Handful of Honeysuckles," Andrew Lang's Ballades and Sharp's "Weird of Michael Scot," Dobson's dealings with the eighteenth century and Noel's "Little Child's Monument," Barnes's Dorsetshire Poems and Buchanan's London Lyrics, the songs from Empedocles on Etna and Ebenezer Jones's "Pagan's Drinking Chant," Shelley's Ode to the West Wind and Mrs. Browning's

[1] "To drown in this great tide is sweet for me."

"Pan is Dead," Newman's hymns and Gosse's Chant Royal. The kaleidoscope presented by this lyric is so inexhaustible that any man with the fragment of a memory might pair off scores of poems by admired authors, and yet not fall upon the same parallels as those which I have made.

The genius of our century, debarred from epic, debarred from drama, falls back upon idyllic and lyrical expression. In the idyll it satisfies its objective craving after art. In the lyric it pours forth personality. It would be wrong, however, to limit the wealth of our poetry to these two branches. Such poems as Wordsworth's "Excursion," Byron's "Don Juan" and "Childe Harold," Mrs. Browning's "Aurora Leigh," William Morris's "Earthly Paradise," Clough's "Amours de Voyage," are not to be classified in either species. They are partly autobiographical, and in part the influence of the tale makes itself distinctly felt in them. Nor again can we omit the translations, of which so many have been made; some of them real masterpieces and additions to our literature. Cary's Dante, Rossetti's versions from the early Tuscan lyrists, Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam, are eminent examples. But the list might be largely extended. Then again Morris's "Song of Sigurd," Swinburne's "Tristram of Lyoness," E. Arnold's "Light of Asia," deserve a place apart, as epical rehandlings of memorable themes.

IV.

In all this Victorian poetry we find the limitations of our epoch, together with its eminent qualities. Criticism and contemplation have penetrated literature with a deeper and more pervasive thoughtfulness. Our poets have lost spontaneity and joyful utterance. But they have acquired a keener sense of the problems which perplex humanity. The author of "In Memoriam" struck a false note when he exclaimed:

I sing but as the linnet sings.

Nothing can be more unlike a linnet's song than the metaphysical numbers of that justly valued threnody. Clough came closer to the truth when he hinted at the poet's problem in this age as thus :

> To finger idly some old Gordian knot,
> Unskilled to sunder and too weak to cleave,
> And with much toil attain to half-believe.

The most characteristic work of the century has a double object, artistic and philosophical. Poetry is used to express some theory of life. In Byron the world-philosophy is cynical or pessimistic. Shelley interweaves his pantheism with visions of human perfectibility. Wordsworth proclaims an esoteric cult of nature. Swinburne at one time rails against the tyrant gods, at another preaches the gospel of republican revolt. Matthew Arnold embodies a system of ethical and æsthetical criticism in his verse. Clough expresses the changes which the Christian faith has undergone, and the perplexities of conduct. Thomson indulges the blackest pessimism, a pessimism more dolorous than Leopardi's. Browning is animated by a robust optimism, turning fearless somersaults upon the brink of the abyss. Mrs. Browning condenses speculations upon social and political problems. Roden Noel, too little appreciated to be rightly understood, attempts a world-embracing metaphysic of mysticism. Even those poets who do not yield so marked a residuum of philosophy are touched to sadness and gravity by the intellectual atmosphere in which they work. Virgil's great line :

> Sunt lacrimæ rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt—

might be chosen as a motto for the *corpus poetarum* of our epoch. In reading what the age has produced, certain phrases linger in our memory—

> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.
>
> The still, sad music of humanity.

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Tears from the depth of some divine despair.

Seek, seeker, in thyself, submit to find
In the stones bread and life in the blank mind.

These haunt us like leading-phrases, the master notes of the whole music.

Starting with enthusiasm at the commencement of the century, our poets have gradually lost such glow of hope as inspired them with spontaneous numbers in its earlier decades. The wide survey of elder and contemporary literatures submitted to their gaze has rendered them more assimilative, reproductive, imitative, reminiscent than spontaneous. When Matthew Arnold defined poetry in general to be "a criticism of life," he uttered a curious and pregnant paradox. It would be hardly a paradox to assert that Victorian poetry is in large measure the criticism of all existing literatures. More and more we have dedicated our powers to the study of technicalities, to the cultivation of the graces, the elaboration of ornament, and to the acclimatisation upon English soil of flowers borrowed from alien gardens of the Muses. We have forgotten what George Sand said to Flaubert about style: "Tu la considères comme un but, elle n'est qu'un effet." The result is a polychromatic abundance of what may be called cultured poetry, which does not reach the heart of the people, and does not express its spirit. That is due, no doubt, in part to the fact that there is less of aspiration than of meditation to deal with now, less of an actual joy in eventful living than of serious reflection upon the meanings and the purposes of life. Yet this poetry is true to the spirit of a critical and cultured age; and when the time comes to gather up the jewels of Victorian literature, it will be discovered how faithfully the poets have uttered the thoughts of the educated minority.

A comprehensive survey of our poetry is rendered difficult

by the fact that no type, like the drama of the sixteenth century, has controlled its movement. We cannot regard it as a totality composed of many parts, progressing through several stages of development. In this respect, again, it obeys the intellectual conditions of the century. Its inner unity will eventually be found, not in the powerful projection of a nation's soul, but in the careful analysis and subtle delineation of thoughts and feelings which agitated society during one of the most highly self-conscious and speculative periods which the world has passed through. The genius of the age is scientific, not artistic. In such an age poetry must perforce be auxiliary to science, showing how individual minds have been touched to fine issues of rhythmic utterance by the revolutions in thought which history, philosophy, and criticism are effecting.

V.

Passing from these general reflections to points of comparison in detail, we must remember that Victorian poetry started with a return to Elizabethan, and that this motive impulse has never wholly been lost sight of. The two periods may be fitly compared in that which both possess in common, a copious and splendid lyric. Our means of studying Elizabethan lyric poetry have been largely increased in the past years by the labours of Mr. Thomas Oliphant, Professor Arber, Mr. W. J. Linton, and Mr. A. H. Bullen. To the last-named of these gentlemen we owe three volumes of lyrics culled from Elizabethan song-books, which are a perfect mine of hitherto neglected treasures.[1] Taken in connection with the songs from the dramatists and the collected lyrics of men like Sidney, Raleigh, Spenser, Herrick, these books furnish us with a tolerably complete body of poems in this species.

[1] They are published by Mr. J. C. Nimmo, the last of them called, "Love Poems from the Song-Books of the Seventeenth Century," being privately printed.

What strikes us in the whole of this great mass of lyric poetry, is its perfect adaptation to music, its limpidity and directness of utterance. Like Shelley's skylark, the poet has been

> Pouring his full heart
> In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Each composition is meant to be sung, and can be sung, because the poet's soul was singing when he made it. They are not all of one kind or of equal simplicity. The lyrics from the song-books, for example, have not the intensity of some songs introduced into the dramas of that period, "in which," as Mr. Pater once observed while speaking of the verses sung by Mariana's page in *Measure for Measure*, "the kindling power and poetry of the whole play seems to pass for a moment into an actual strain of music." They are rarely so high-strung and weighty with meaning as Webster's dirges, or as Ford's and Shirley's solemn descants on the transitoriness of earthly love and glory. Nor, again, do we often welcome in them that fulness of romantic colour which makes the lyrics of Beaumont and Fletcher so resplendent. This is perhaps because their melodies are not the outgrowth of dramatic situations, but have their life and being in the aërial element of musical sound. For the purposes of singing they are exactly adequate, being substantial enough to sustain and animate the notes, and yet so slight as not to overburden these with too much meditation and emotion. We feel that they have arisen from the natural marrying of musical words to musical phrases in the minds which made them. They are the right verbal counterpart to vocal and instrumental melody, never perplexing and surcharging the tones which need language for a vehicle with complexities of fancy, involutions of ideas, or the disturbing tyranny of vehement passions. And this right quality of song, the presence of which indicates widespread familiarity with musical requirements in England of the sixteenth century, may be likewise

found in the more deliberate lyrics of dramatic or literary poets—in Jonson's and Shakespeare's stanzas, in the lofty odes of Spenser and the jewelled workmanship of Herrick.

We discover but little of this quality in the lyrics of the Victorian age. It is noticeable that those poets upon whom we are apt to set the least store now, as Byron, Scott, Hood, Campbell, Moore, Barry Cornwall, Mrs. Hemans, possessed it in greater perfection than their more illustrious contemporaries.

I once asked an eminent musician, the late Madame Goldschmidt, why Shelley's lyrics were ill-adapted to music. She made me read aloud to her the "Song of Pan" and those lovely lines "To the Night," "Swiftly walk o'er the western wave, Spirit of Night!" Then she pointed out how the verbal melody seemed intended to be self-sufficing in these lyrics, how full of complicated thoughts and changeful images the verse is, how packed with consonants the words are, how the tone of emotion alters, and how no one melodic phrase could be found to fit the dædal woof of the poetic emotion.

> "Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
> Star-inwrought!
> Blind with thine hair the eyes of day,
> Kiss her until she be wearied out—

"How different that is," said Madame Goldschmidt, "from the *largo* of your Milton:

> "Let the bright Seraphim in burning row,
> Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow![1]

"How different it is from Heine's simplicity:

> "Auf Flügeln des Gesanges
> Herzliebchen trag' ich dich fort.

"I can sing *them*," and she did sing them then and there, much to my delight; "and I can sing Dryden, but I could

[1] Madame Goldschmidt sang these lines from the book of Handel's "Samson." In Milton they begin with *where*, not *let*.

not sing your Shelley, Wordsworth, Keats; no, and not much of your Tennyson either. Tennyson has sought out all the solid, sharp words, and put them together; music cannot come between." This was long ago, and it gave me many things to think over, until I could comprehend to what extent the best lyrics of the Victorian age are not made to be sung.

Madame Goldschmidt's remarks were only partially true perhaps. There is no reason, if we possessed a Schubert, why Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" should not be set to music; and Handel could surely have written alternate choruses and solos for a considerable part of Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty." Yet the fact remains that Victorian lyrics are not so singable as Elizabethan lyrics; and the reason is that they are far more complex, not in their verbal structure merely, but in the thoughts, images, emotions which have prompted them. The words carry too many, too various, too contemplative suggestions. Nothing can be lyrically more lovely than:

> Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.

Or than:

> Fair are others: none beholds thee:
> But thy voice sounds low and tender
> Like the fairest, for it folds thee
> From the sight, that liquid splendour;
> And all feel, yet see thee never,
> As I feel now, lost for ever!

Or than:

> Will no one tell me what she sings?
> Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
> For old, unhappy, far-off things,
> And battles long ago;
> Or is it some more humble lay,
> Familiar matters of to-day?
> Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
> That has been, and may be again.

But Wordsworth in the last of these examples is meditative, reflective, questioning; his stanza will not suit the directness of musical melody. But the finest phrases in the specimens from Keats and Shelley, "charmed magic casements," "perilous seas," "that liquid splendour," perplex and impede the movement of song.

It is not precisely in poignancy or depth or gravity of thought that the Victorian differ from the Elizabethan lyrists. What can be more poignant than:

> Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
> Thou dost not bite so nigh
> As benefits forgot:
> Though thou the waters warp,
> Thy sting is not so sharp
> As friend remembered not.

What can be deeper than:

> Of what is't fools make such vain keeping?
> Sin their conception, their birth weeping;
> Their life a general mist of error,
> Their death a hideous storm of terror.

What can be graver than:

> The glories of our birth and state
> Are shadows, not substantial things;
> There is no armour against fate,
> Death lays his icy hand on kings.

For pure poignancy, profundity, and weight, Elizabethan lyrics will compare not unfavourably with Victorian. The difference does not consist in the ore worked by the lyrists, but in their way of handling it. In this latter age a poet allows himself far wider scope of treatment when he writes a song. He does not think of the music of voice or viol, but of that harmony which intellectually sounds in the ears of the soul. The result is a wealthier and fuller symphony, reaching the imaginative sense not upon the path of musical sound, but appealing to the mental ear and also to that "inward eye which is the bliss of solitude." The Victorian

lyric, superior in its range, suggestiveness, variety, and richness, inferior in its spontaneity and birdlike intonation, corresponds to the highly-strung and panharmonic instrument of the poet's spirit which produced it, and to the manifold sympathies of the reader's mind for which it was intended. It is iridescent with the intermingled hues of fancy, contemplation, gnomic wisdom, personal passion, discursive rhetoric, idyllic picture-painting. Modes of complicated expression, involving serried reasoning, audacious metaphors, elliptical imagery, and rapid modulations from one key of feeling to another, which a playwright like Shakespeare employed only in his dramatic dialogue, find themselves at home in the lyrical poetry of our age.

VI.

For another point of comparison, let us take some of those "lyrical interbreathings" in Elizabethan dramatic dialogue, which are surcharged with sweetness, and contrast these with the sweetness of Victorian verse. I might select Shakespeare's lines upon the flowers scattered by Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*. But I prefer to choose my examples from less illustrious sources. Here, then, is the sweetness of Fletcher:

> I do her wrong, much wrong; she's young and blessed,
> Fair as the spring, and as his blossoms tender;
> But I, a nipping north-wind, my head hung
> With hails and frosty icicles: are the souls so too,
> When they depart hence—lame, and old, and loveless?
> Ah, no! 'tis ever youth there: age and death
> Follow our flesh no more; and that forced opinion,
> That spirits have no sexes, I believe not.

Here is the sweetness of Ford:

> For he is like to something I remember,
> A great while since, a long, long time ago.

Here is the sweetness of Dekker:

> No, my dear lady, I could weary stars,
> And force the wakeful moon to lose her eyes,

By my late watching, but to wait on you.
When at your prayers you kneel before the altar,
Methinks I'm singing with some quire in heaven,
So blest I hold me in your company.

Here is the sweetness of Massinger:

This beauty, in the blossom of my youth,
When my first fire knew no adulterate incense,
Nor I no way to flatter but my fondness,
In all the bravery my friends could show me,
In all the faith my innocence could give me,
In the best language my true tongue could tell me,
And in the broken sighs my sick heart lent me,
I sued and served.

The sweetness of these passages, none of which are singular, or such as may not be easily matched with scores of equal passages from the same and other playwrights, is like the sweetness of honey distilling from the honeycomb. It falls unsought and unpremeditated with the perfume of wilding flowers. Nay more, like honey from the jaws of Samson's lion, we feel it to be *ex forti dulcedo*, the sweetness of strength.

When we turn to the sweetness of Victorian poetry, we rarely find exactly the same quality. In Keats it is overloaded; in Coleridge it is sultry; in William Morris it is cloying; in Swinburne it is inebriating; in Shelley it is volatilised; in Wordsworth it is somewhat thin and arid; in Tennyson it is sumptuous; in Rossetti it is powerfully perfumed. We have exchanged the hedgerow flowers for heavy-headed double roses, and instead of honey we are not unfrequently reminded—pardon the expression—of jam. Poets who, by happy accident or deliberate enthusiasm, have at some moment come nearest to the Elizabethan simplicity and liquidity of utterance, catch this honeyed sweetness best. We feel that Browning caught it when he wrote:

A footfall there
Suffices to upturn to the warm air

Half-germinating spices ; mere decay
Produces richer life, and day by day
New pollen on the lily petal grows,
And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.

Tennyson produced something different when he wrote that musical idyll—"Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height," which closes upon two incomparable lines of linked melody long drawn out :

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

Here, as in the former instance of lyric verse, it would be unreasonable to contend that Elizabethan poets surpassed the Victorian. On the contrary, the latter know more distinctly what they are about, and sustain the sweetness of their style at a more equal level. They are capable of a more perfectly even flow of sugared verse. What we have to notice is that the quality has altered, and that the change is due to the more involved, more concentrated intellectual conditions of the later age. Poets are no longer contented with impulsive expression. And as I said before, they cannot "recapture the first fine careless rapture" of their adolescent masters in the art of song. The wayward breezes and the breath of wild flowers in the earlier sweetness escape them.

VII.

The freedom and spontaneity of the Elizabethan age had attendant drawbacks. Owing to the absence of reflection and self-criticism, poets fell into the vices of extravagance and exaggeration, bombast and euphuism. In their use of language, the indulgence of their fancy, the expression of sentiment and the choice of imagery, they sought after emphasis, and displayed but little feeling for the virtue of reserve. All the playwrights, without even the exception of Shakespeare, are tainted with these blemishes. Jonson, who

was an excellent critic when he dictated mature opinions in prose, showed a lack of taste and selection in his dramas. There is a carelessness, a want of balance, a defect of judgment in the choice of materials and their management, a slovenliness of execution, throughout the work of that period. Superfluities of every kind abound, and at the same time we are distressed by singular baldness in details. What can be poorer, for example, than Jonson's translations from Virgil and Catullus, more clumsy and superfluous than his translations from Sallust and Tacitus? Poets seem to have been satisfied with saying, "This will do," instead of labouring till the thing was as it had to be. They tossed their beauties like foam upon the tide of tumultuous and energetic inspiration. Yet even in this carelessness and unconsidered fecundity, we recognise some of the noblest qualities of the Elizabethan genius. There is nothing small or mean or compassed in that art. Its vices are the vices of the prodigal, not of the miser; of the genial spendthrift, whose imprudence lies nearer to generosity than to wanton waste. We pardon many faults for the abounding vigour which marks these poets; for their wealth of suggestive ideas, their true sympathy with nature, their insight into the workings of the human heart, their profuse stream of fresh and healthy feeling.

When the Elizabethan spirit declined in England, it was the business of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to impose limits on all this "unchartered freedom" of the intellect. Then the good and bad effects of critical canons and academical authority came to light. We had our Dryden and our Pope, our Goldsmith and Swift, our Addison and Steele, our Fielding and Johnson. But we had also a deplorable lack of real poetry in comparison with the foison of Elizabethan harvests. If not miserly, the English genius, so far as fancy and imagination are concerned, became thrifty. It erred by caution rather than by carelessness. It

doled its treasures out like one who has a well-filled purse indeed, but who is not hopeful of turning all he touches into gold like Midas.

At the beginning of the Victorian age one sign of the return to Elizabethanism was the license which poets allowed themselves in matters pertaining to their art. Keats, in "Endymion," Shelley, in "The Revolt of Islam," Byron, in nearly every portion of his work, displayed Elizabethan faults of emphasis, unpruned luxuriance, defective balance. It was impossible, however, for the nineteenth century to be as euphuistic or as chaotic as the sixteenth. Taste, trained by critical education, and moulded by the writers of Queen Anne's reign, might rebel against rules, but could not help regarding them. In spite of these restraints, however, poets who almost exactly reproduced the Elizabethans in their blemishes and virtues, like Wells and Beddoes, poets who caricatured them with a pathetic touch of difference, like Sydney Dobell and Alexander Smith, appeared about the middle of the century. And then Browning loomed on the horizon, surely the brawniest neo-Elizabethan Titan whom our age has seen, and whom it has latterly chosen to adore. As years advanced, mere haphazard fluency grew to be less and less admired; and while keeping still within the sphere of romantic as opposed to classical art, the English poets aimed at chastened diction, correct form, polished versification. Tennyson, who represents the height of the Victorian period, brought poetic style again to the Miltonic or Virgilian point of finish. In him a just conception of the work as a whole, a consciousness of his aims and how to attain them, together with a high standard of verbal execution, are combined with richness of fancy and sensuous magnificence worthy of an Elizabethan poet in all his glory.

When, therefore, we compare the two epochs upon this point of taste and style, we are able to award the palm of excellence to the latter. Having lost much, we have gained

at least what is implied in artistic self-control, without relapsing into the rigidity of the last century.

VIII.

The freedom, about which I have said so much, as forming the main note of Elizabethan poetry, accounts for the boldness with which men of letters treated moral topics, and for their clear-sighted outlook over a vast sphere of ethical casuistry. Not to the spirit of that age, but to the genius of our nation, I ascribe the manly instinct which guided these pioneers of exploration and experience through many a hazardous passage. The touch of the Elizabethan poets in such matters was almost uniformly right. They may show themselves gross, plain-spoken, voluptuous. We should not tolerate Jonson's Crispinus, or Shakespeare's Mercutio, or Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* at the present day. But they were not prurient or wilfully provocative. It is impossible to imagine an Elizabethan Aretino, or an Elizabethan Beccadelli—writers, that is to say, who deliberately attempt to interest those who read their works in moral garbage. Of garbage there is enough in that literature, and more than enough; but only in the same sense as there were open drains and kennels in the streets of London, by the brink of which high-tempered gentlemen walked, and duels were fought, while dreams of love warmed young imaginations, and wise debates on state-craft or the destinies of empires were held by greybeards. Of such kind is the rivulet of filth in Elizabethan poetry, coursing, as the sewer then coursed, along the paths of men, dividing human habitations.

We have forced the sewage, which is inseparable from humanity, to run underneath our streets and houses. We have prohibited the entrance of unsavoury topics into our literature. If Marston were born again among us we should stop our noses, and bid the fellow stand aloof. Even Thomas Carlyle has been christened by even Mr. Swinburne, Copros-

tomos, or some such Byzantine title, indicating intolerable coarseness. This shows how resolute we are to root out physical noisomeness, and with what sincerity we prefer typhoid poison to the plague accompanied by evil odours. It does not prove that we are spiritually cleaner than our ancestors. The right deduction is that the race has preserved its wholesomeness under conditions altered by a change of manners. Neither then nor now, in the age of Elizabeth or in the age of Victoria, has the English race devoted its deliberate attention to nastiness.

In breadth of view, variety of subject, our Victorian poets rival the Elizabethan. Life has been touched again at all points and under every aspect with equal boldness and with almost equal manliness. But since the drama has ceased to be the leading form of literature, the treatment of moral topics has of necessity become more analytical and reflective. If space allowed, this opinion might be supported by a comparison of the two epochs with regard to philosophic poetry. In sententious maxims, apophthegms on human fate, pithy saws, and proverbial hints for conduct, Elizabethan literature abounds. But we do not here meet with poems steeped in a pervading tone of thought—thought issuing from the writer's self, shaping his judgments, controlling his sensations, modelling his language, forcing the reader to sojourn for a season in the brain-wrought palace of his mood. For instance, Shakespeare uttered the surest word of imaginative doubt, of that scepticism which makes man question his own substantiality, when Prospero exclaimed :

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

Marston in one phrase expressed man's desire to escape from self, that impossible desire which underlies all reaction against the facts of personal existence :

> Can man by no means creep out of himself,
> And leave the slough of viperous grief behind?

Webster reiterated a dark conviction of man's impotence in lines like these:

> We are merely the stars' tennis-balls, struck and bandied
> Which way please them.

Yet neither these nor any other Elizabethan poets elaborated their far-reaching views on life into schemes of versified philosophy. We do not find among them a Shelley or a Thomson. Pungent as the gnomic sentences of that age may be, they have relief and background in a large sane sympathy with man's variety of vital functions. The rapier of penetrative scrutiny is plunged and replunged into the deepest and most sensitive recesses of our being. But the thinker speedily withdraws his weapon, and suffers imagination to play with equal curiosity upon the stuff of action, passion, diurnal interests, the woof of sentient self-satisfied existence. Regarding human nature as a complex whole, those poets seized on its generic aspects and touched each aspect with brief incisive precision. Our poets are apt to concentrate their mind upon one aspect, and to sublimate this into an all-engrossing element, which gives a certain sustained colour to their work. Less rich in gnomic wisdom, they are more potent in the communication of settled moods—more "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." It follows that while the Elizabethans had nothing of what Goethe called "lazzaretto poetry," we have much. The affectations of our age do not run toward verbal euphuism, but toward sickliness of sentiment and a simulated discontent with the world around us. A man of Mr. Mallock's calibre would not have set society in the sixteenth century at work upon the problem, "Is life worth living?" Schopenhauer and Hartmann could hardly have existed then, and they assuredly would not have found disciples. But in an age which produces essayists and philosophers of this sort, poetry cannot fail to be introspective

and tinged with morbidity. Fortunately, though this is so, few verses have been written by Englishmen during the nineteenth century of which their authors need repent upon the death-bed.

IX.

The Elizabethan poets, far more truly than their Italian predecessors, if we except Dante, and more truly than any of their contemporaries in other countries, loved external nature for its own sake. There is hardly any aspect of the visible world, from the flowers of the field to the storm-clouds of the zenith, from the stars in their courses to the moonlight sleeping on a bank, from the embossed foam, covering the sea-verge, to the topless Apennines, which was not seized with fine objective sensibility and illustrated with apt imagery by Shakespeare and his comrades. Yet, keenly appreciative of nature as these poets were, nature remained a background to humanity in all their pictures. Her wonders were treated as adjuncts to man, who moved across the earth and viewed its miracles upon his passage. Therefore, although imaginatively and sympathetically handled, these things were lightly and casually sketched.

The case is different with the literature of this century, for reasons which can be stated. In the first place, our poets have mostly been men leading a solitary life, in close connection with nature, withdrawn from the busy hum of populous cities. Byron, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Rossetti: it is clear, by only mentioning the leading poets of our age, that this is the fact; and to enlarge the list would be to prove the point superfluously. Unlike the writers of the Restoration and Queen Anne's reign, Victorian poets have not breathed the atmosphere of society, the town, the coffee-house. Even if they lived in London, the town, the coffee-house, society had ceased to exist for them. Unlike the writers of Elizabeth's and James's reigns, they have not

had the theatre, with its paramount interest in human action and passion, its vast and varied audience, to concentrate their gaze on man. And while circumstance divided them in this way from what Pope called "the proper study of mankind," the special forms of poetry they cultivated—idyllic and contemplative verse, lyric in its extended sense, descriptive and reflective—led them perforce to nature as a source of inspiration. They worked, moreover, through a period in which the sister art of painting devoted herself continually more and more to the delineation of the outer world in landscape. And this brings us to the decisive difference, the deep and underlying reason why external nature has exercised so powerful and penetrative an influence over contemporary poetry. What we call science, that main energy of the age, which has sapped old systems of thought, and is creating a new basis for religion, forces man to regard himself as part and parcel of the universe. He is no longer merely *in* it, moving through it, viewing it and turning it round, as Sir Thomas Browne delightfully said, for his recreation. He knows himself to be, in a deep and serious sense, *of* it, obedient to the elements, owning allegiance to the sun.

Even the poets of the beginning of the century, who resented the impact of science most—even Keats, who cried:

> Do not all charms fly
> At the mere touch of cold philosophy?

bowed to the dominant spirit of the nineteenth century. Keats, "the Elizabethan born out of due time," as he has been called, kept himself indeed unspotted from the contagion of science. Yet his passion for nature, moving though it did on lines traced by Spenser, has a far greater intensity, a far more fiery self-abandonment to the intoxication of earth, than would have been possible in the sixteenth century. Professor Conington used to formulate Keats's craving after nature in a somewhat ribald epigram: "Would thou wert a

lollipop, then I could suck thee." The modern spirit took this form of sensuous imaginative subjectivity in Keats. In Byron it became a kind of lust, burning but disembodied, an escapement of the defrauded and disillusioned soul into communings with forces blindly felt to be in better and more natural tune with him than men were. Shelley's metaphysical mind was touched by nature to utterances of rapt philosophy, which may some day form the sacred songs of universal religion. "Prometheus Unbound" and the peroration of "Adonais" enclose in liquid numbers that sense of spirituality permeating the material world upon which our future hopes are founded. Wordsworth, working apart from his contemporaries, expressed man's affinity to nature and man's dependence on the cosmic order with greater reserve. Still, it is difficult to go farther in nature-worship than Wordsworth did in those sublimely pathetic lines written above Tintern Abbey; and nothing indicates the difference between the Victorian and the Elizabethan touch on the world better than his blank verse fragment describing a pedestrian journey through the Simplon Pass.

In the course of the nineteenth century it might seem as though this passion for nature—the passion of Keats, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth—had declined. To assume this would, however, be a great mistake. What has steadily declined is the Elizabethan strain, the way of looking upon nature from outside. The modern strain, the way of looking upon nature as congenial to man, has strengthened, but with fear and rending of the heart, and doubt. The time is not yet ripe for poetry to resume the results of science with imaginative grasp. What has been called the cosmic enthusiasm is too undefined as yet, too unmanageable, too pregnant with anxious and agitating surmise, to find free utterance in emotional literature. In our days science is more vitally poetical than art; it opens wider horizons and excites the spirit more than verse can do. Where are the fictions of the fancy compared

with the vistas revealed by astronomers, biologists, physicists, geologists? Yet signs are not wanting—I see them in some of the shorter poems of Lord Tennyson, I see them in the great neglected work of Roden Noel, I see them in the fugitive attempts of many lesser men than these—which justify a sober critic in predicting that our century's enthusiasm for nature is but the prelude to a more majestic poetry, combining truth with faith and fact with imagination, than the world has ever known.

X.

It will have been noticed that in this essay the terms Elizabethan and Victorian are used with considerable laxity. The object is to define two periods of English literature, the one extending from Wyatt to Milton, or, roughly speaking, from the year 1530 to the year 1650, the other covering the whole of the nineteenth century, and dating from the publication of Walter Savage Landor's "Gebir." These two periods are divided by a space of a hundred and fifty years, during which our literature developed upon lines divergent from the course taken by the Renaissance of the sixteenth century. I have contended that Victorian literature is marked by a reaction in favour of Elizabethanism, and that the general scope and tone of poetry in these periods are closely similar.

Form is a matter of such prominence in art that I shall perhaps be excused for recapitulating some points upon this topic. During the Restoration and Queen Anne's reign, versifiers lost the power and liking for that English unrhymed iambic, which began with Marlowe and culminated with Milton. They dropped the use of lyric measures, rarely employed the sestine or the octave or the Spenserian stanza, and so utterly neglected the sonnet, that even a poet of Gray's exquisite tact was unable to produce a tolerable specimen. The song became neat, terse, epigrammatic, shorn of picturesqueness, sparkling with elegance. But the dominant metre

of the eighteenth century was the rhyming couplet. Poets used this form with a fine sense of its point, with a sustained respect for its structural limitations ; not as the Elizabethans had employed it, loosely, with variety of pause and period, and with frequent *enjambements* from one line to another. The wilding graces which we appreciate in the couplets of Marlowe, Beaumont, Spenser, Fletcher, were abhorred by the school of versifiers at whose head stands Pope.

In close connection with these changes in the form of poetry the intermediate period of a hundred and fifty years exhibits a marked alteration of artistic aim and feeling. Diction is corrected, luxuriant shoots are pruned ; wit, sense, and taste—words recurring with significant frequency in the literature of the eighteenth century—are cultivated at the expense of imagination and capricious fancy. At the height of the epoch a conceit is held in abomination, and a play on words regarded as a crime. The point and polish of Pope, the limpid purity of Goldsmith, the weighty eloquence of Johnson, were the climax of this counter movement in our literature. Didactic, satirical, epistolary compositions assumed predominance under the reign of criticism, sense, restricted form.

With the dawn of the Victorian age a second reaction set in. It was indicated by the Rowley poems of Chatterton, the lyrics of Blake, the sonnets of Bowles, the blank verse of Cowper and of Landor. Then the current ran strongly, as we have already seen, toward Elizabethan metres, Elizabethan modes of workmanship, and ways of regarding art and nature. The English Renaissance of the sixteenth century became renascent in the nineteenth.

It has been the purpose of the foregoing pages to show in what way this renascent Elizabethanism of the Victorian epoch differs from that of the earlier period ; how the altered conditions of English life, especially in the growth of great cities and the emergence of grave social problems through

the development of mechanical industry, have saddened and subdued the tone of our poets; how criticism and the physical sciences, together with changes in religious thought, have affected their outlook over the world and man; why they have become more contemplative and analytical, less spontaneous, with a tendency to pessimism, instead of the genial optimism of their predecessors; and finally, to what extent the absence of a commanding type of national art, like the drama, has forced them into idyllic, descriptive, meditative, and lyrical forms of utterance.

It is impossible to condense the net result of this comparison in a single formula. Yet one of the principal conclusions to which it leads us may be singled out. When we survey the literatures of these two epochs, we shall be struck with the generalising force and breadth of the earlier, the particularising subtlety and minuteness of the latter. The Elizabethans seem to sing with one voice, although the key in which their melody is cast may vary. They treat of nature and of man from a common point of view, albeit the world and humanity affect them differently. The Victorians have each a voice of his own, an attitude toward man and nature determined by specific mental faculty. Each has been born something separate, and made something still more separate by education. Elizabethan art is instinctive, Victorian art reflective. The material submitted to the workman in the one age is a complex whole; and this is surveyed in its superficies, seized in its salient aspects. In the other age the complex has been disintegrated, parcelled into details by the operation of sympathies and intuitions proper to distinct individualities. Our first question with regard to an Elizabethan is: What grasp and grip does he possess upon the common stuff of art? Our first question with regard to a Victorian is: How does the man envisage things, from what point of view does he start, by what specific spirit is he controlled? Thus in the nineteenth century we come face to face with individualities who

affect us mainly through the tone of their particular natures. The poets are critical and self-conscious in creation. We are critical and self-conscious in submission to their influence, in estimating their achievement. This intimate and pungent personality, settling the poet's attitude toward things, moulding his moral sympathies, flavouring his philosophy of life and conduct, colouring his style, separating him from fellow-workers, is the leading characteristic of Victorian literature —that which distinguishes it most markedly from the Elizabethan.

While many points have been passed in review much has naturally been omitted, and the method of treatment has necessitated the suppression of important modifications. It would in the one case have been interesting to raise the question how far Puritanism influenced the national tone in literature; whether, for example, the abeyance into which music fell after the Commonwealth, had anything to do with the decline of song and spontaneous melody. It would have been desirable in the second case, while treating of Restoration, Queen Anne, and Georgian poetry, to have qualified some sweeping statements by an examination of a lyrist like Gray, and to have shown to what extent the three main periods marked out shade into one another at their edges. But two Greek proverbs, no less than want of space, warn me to lay down the pen here. "Nothing overmuch," "The half is better than the whole."

APPENDIX.

DARWIN'S THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD.

No small interest attaches to the religious opinions of a man who influenced our thoughts about the world so much as the late Charles Darwin did. His biography, written by his son Francis Darwin, contains a chapter on Religion, in which some valuable details are communicated.[1] I do not think that more ought to be desired or expected from a man of Darwin's stamp than the suspended judgment which concludes his trenchant and yet cautious utterances upon the subject of theology. "The safest conclusion seems to me that the whole subject is beyond the scope of man's intellect; but man can do his duty."[2] Having arrived at the opinion that ontology is hardly a fit topic for the human reason, Darwin states his own attitude in the following modest phrases:[3]

> What my own views may be is a question of no consequence to any one but myself. But as you ask, I may state that my judgment often fluctuates. . . . In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an Atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God. I think that generally (and more and more as I grow older), but not always, that an Agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind.

It is clear from this quotation that Darwin did not accept Atheist and Agnostic as convertible terms. If we collect the sense of all his dicta upon the relation of the world to a Divine Being, we shall perceive that he regarded a God as the most reasonable hypothesis, but that many things in the order of the universe, "the increased amount of suffering through the world,"[4] for instance, were obstacles to his maintenance of this hypothesis in full faith. What he meant by Agnosticism appears to have been an indecision as to the definition of God, and a profound doubt as to the power possessed by man of reaching Him. One paragraph from his letter dictated in answer to a German student puts this very plainly:[5]

> He considers that the theory of Evolution is quite compatible with the belief in a God; but that you must remember that different persons have different definitions of what they mean by God.

---

[1] Vol. i. cap. viii. [2] P. 307. [3] P. 304. [4] P. 307. [5] P. 307.

Critical investigation of the so-called evidences of Christianity, and the comparison of other religions, brought him to a practical abandonment of revelation.[1] He felt that the immortality of the soul has to be regarded as an open question.[2] He discussed Pessimism with a clear perception of its ground and issues; and on the whole he pronounced himself a moderate Optimist.[3] He rejected the subjective or sentimental "argument for the existence of an intelligent God, drawn from the deep inward conviction and feelings which are experienced by most persons."[4] At the same time, he recorded his opinion that the argument drawn from reason was more cogent with his mind. He could not bring himself to regard "this immense and wonderful universe, including man, with his capacity of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of blind chance or necessity."[5] In like manner the argument derived, partly from subjective instinct, partly from reason, for the immortality of the soul, had considerable weight with him.[6] His chief doubt, in valuing these arguments from instinct and reason, was whether the mind of man can be trusted to draw any conclusions in the matter.[7] Returning at last to the point from which we started, he declares:[8] "I cannot pretend to throw the least light on such abstruse problems. The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us; and I for one must be content to remain an Agnostic."

What Darwin meant by being an Agnostic seems pretty clear now; and it is also pretty clear why he felt sometimes that he "deserved to be called a Theist."[9]

Agnostic is the vague denomination for a genus including several species. According to their temperament or to their earlier associations, Agnostics lean either to Atheism or to Theism. They agree in pronouncing the problem of the universe to be insoluble; but they are variously coloured by divers inclinations toward the faiths they have abandoned. One is an Optimist by natural bent, another is a Pessimist. But their common link is a certain negative relation to creeds they formerly professed. Among Agnostics, Darwin leant toward Theism. Habit, instinct, and reason drew him in that direction. It was long before he worked off his early belief in

[1] P. 307, "For myself," etc. P. 308, "But I had gradually," down to "had some weight with me."

[2] P. 307, "As for a future life," etc.

[3] P. 307, "Nor can I overlook," etc. P. 309-11, "Some writers indeed," down to "variation and natural selection."

[4] P. 312, "Formerly I was led," etc.

[5] P. 312. Compared p. 306, "But I may say that the impossibility," etc. Also p. 316, "Nevertheless, you have expressed," etc.

[6] P. 312, "With respect to immortality," down to "will not appear so dreadful."

[7] P. 313, "But then arises the doubt," etc. P. 316, "But then with me the horrid doubt," etc.

[8] P. 313.

[9] P. 312, "When thus reflecting," etc.

revelation, and the nature of that belief continued to qualify his reasoning when he entertained theological speculations.

I gather from several passages in this chapter that Darwin never transcended the conception of Deity as Providence, as a designing Person, with purpose in each detail of creation.[1] These passages are in part directed against teleology. But they also show that their author still thought of God from Paley's point of view.[2] He continued to regard God as the theologians of English orthodoxy made Him—as a Being constructing the world from outside, planning its contrivances and directing each event to a calculated end. Darwin never speaks as though the conception of Deity immanent in the universe were tenable.

For example, he remarks that while he (Darwin) is designedly shooting a bird in order to obtain food, the lightning is destroying a good man. "Do you believe," he asks, "that God designedly killed this man? Many or most persons believe this; I can't and don't." Here a dilemma is stated: either God made the lightning kill a good man in the same way as I killed a bird, or He did not. It does not occur to him that there is no dilemma except upon his own assumption that God directed the flash of lightning with the providential design of killing the good man, just as he (Darwin) discharged his gun with the purpose of killing the bird. Then he proceeds to another instance: "If you believe so (*i. e.* that God *designedly* killed this man), do you believe that when a swallow snaps up a gnat that God designed that that particular swallow should snap up that particular gnat at that particular instant? I believe that the man and the gnat are in the same predicament. If the death of neither man nor gnat are designed, I see no reason to believe that their *first* birth or production should be necessarily designed." All through this reasoning he argues on the hypothesis that God must have used the lightning in the destruction of the man and the swallow in the death of the gnat with the same kind of purpose as that with which the sportsman uses his gun. This proves, I think, that he had not come to reflect on the notion of Deity without a remnant of Paleyism. He argued, as no other man had equal right to argue, against current conceptions of design in Nature and special providences in physical occurrences.[3] But the old habit of regarding God only as Providence, only as Designer, prevented him from seeing that, so far as God or the order of the universe is concerned, lightning, swallow, and sportsman stand precisely upon one level with regard to the good man, gnat, and pheasant they respectively destroy. The difficulties which lie in the way of regarding the universe as the sport of chance were manifest to Darwin. His reason demanded a supreme Law—

[1] P. 313, "The mind refuses," down to p. 316, "existed in the moon."

[2] This is confirmed by a very emphatic confidence about Paley in a letter to Sir John Lubbock. *Life*, vol. ii. p. 219.

[3] See in particular p. 309, "Although I did not think," down to "which the wind blows."

a God of some sort; but Paley's extramundane God still haunted him, and prevented him from ever entertaining the notion that God may be Himself the supreme Law and Life of the universe. Would such a God be personal? Agnostics leaning to theism are not bound to answer that question. No theologies have made us comprehend what a personal God means. We do not know what personality actually is, either in ourselves or in any other being; yet the idea of God, regarded as the Law and Life of the universe—planned we know not how, and pursuing its development on paths beyond the ken of human senses and intelligence—accords with Darwin's own dictum:[1] "The theory of Evolution is quite compatible with the belief in a God."

THE LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE.

NOTHING is known by human beings which is not in the consciousness of collective or individual humanity—in the mind of the race or of the person.

What this means is, that man cannot get outside himself, cannot leap off his own shadow, cannot obtain a conception of the universe except as a mode of his own consciousness. He is man, and must accept the universe as apprehended by his manhood.

It does not therefore follow that what man knows *is* the universe. It does not follow that man's sense and thought create the outer world. It does not even follow that the laws of human consciousness are the laws of Being. The utmost we are justified in saying is, that man forms an integral part of the world, and that his consciousness is consequently a substantial portion of the whole.

All that Philosophy can do is to analyse the mass of human thoughts and feelings, to ascertain the limits within which we apprehend the world, and to show the direction in which our faculties may be applied. Philosophy must abandon ontological explanations of the universe. These have invariably proved their own futility, being successively left behind and superseded in the progress of relative science, by which is meant the development of human thought and knowledge about the world.

The science of God and the science of Being, Theology and Ontology, have no foundation except in the subjectivity of man. Both are seen to involve impertinences, naïvetés, solemn self-complacences, the egotism of Narcissus doting on his own perfections mirrored in the darkness of the river of the universe.

This does not preclude a sincere belief in man's power to obtain partial knowledge of the world. Such knowledge, so far as it goes, rests on a firm basis; for man is, *ex hypothesi*, an integer in the

[1] P. 307.

universe, and his consciousness accordingly represents a factor of the universal order. The mistake of theology and of ontology is to transfer this partial knowledge to the account of the whole. These self-styled sciences are only doing what polytheism and mythology did. They are attempting to account for the whole by the experience of a part of it, which experience varies according to the stages of the growth of the creature we call man.

It may be demanded of me, then, why, holding these views, professing the Agnostic creed, I speak of God as Law, brought back to us by modern science?

The answer is simple. It rests upon the root-conception that man, in all his qualities, but most essentially in the highest part of him, his mind, forms a real portion of the world. Being a portion, he cannot apprehend the whole: to do that was the pretension of theologians and ontologists. Yet this part, this man, raised to self-consciousness, increasing always in his grasp on partial knowledge, is brought continually more and more into the presence of a Force, a Life, a Being, call it what you will, which he is bound to recognise and worship as the essence which fashioned him and which keeps him in existence.

Man has the right to use time-honoured language, and to designate his apprehension of the unity in Nature by that venerable title, God. He is only doing now what all the men from whom he is descended did before him. Mumbo Jumbo, Indra, Shiva, Jahve, Zeus, Odin, Balder, Christ, Allah—what are these but names for the Inscrutable, adapted to the modes of thought which gave them currency? God is the same, and His years do not change. It is only our way of presenting the unknown to human imagination which varies.

We are at liberty to leave God out of our account, and to maintain that we can do without that hypothesis. But how shall we then stand? We must remain face to face with the infinite organism of the universe, which, albeit we can never know it in itself, is always being presented to our limited intelligence as more completely and organically one. The mystery flies before us, and will ever fly. The more we say we know, and the more we really know, the less can we afford to omit the elements of unsearchableness and awe-inspiring unity which have produced religions.

In these circumstances we are led back to the primitive conditions of human thought. We still must acknowledge a power from which we spring, which includes all things, which is the real reality of all we partly grasp by knowledge. Evade it as we will, we are driven to the conclusion, at which the earliest men arrived, that human intelligence alone is insufficient to account for the universe, and that there is a Something beyond, with which man is indissolubly connected, and which has to be approached in the spirit of devotion. This Something, now as then, compels reverence and inspires awe. We may call it God or not as we think fit. Meanwhile it subsists—the one paramount fact, in comparison with which all other facts are

unimportant. It is variously envisaged by successive generations, according to the tenor of their sensibilities and the nature of their speculation. Was there ever, or is there now, any other God but this?

The augmentation of knowledge only increases our sense of the reality and inscrutability of Being. Science and Agnosticism are therefore paths whereby we are brought back to religion under forms adapted to present conceptions of the world we live in, and of which we are a part.

To these reflections I append (without fear of trespass) some verses, in which the same thoughts have found emotional utterance. They were suggested by the problems of death and doubtful immortality, than which none other rack the heart of man in his impotence and ignorance more cruelly:

Since none returns to us upon the way
Which leads through darkness to the land of light,
What of that perilous journey can we say?

Nothing. We watch the frost of sickness blight
Our darlings: blood and nerve with age grow weak;
And sleep prepares our soul for endless night.

Were it not well to take our ease, nor seek
An answer to the question all will ask?
Against the bars of pitiless death we break

Those soaring wings, which no ethereal task
Of poet or of sage hath taught to stoop.
Surely 'twere well beneath the sun to bask,

Like flowers to bloom, like flowers to fade and droop,
Drinking the dews of morning and of eve.
Rank after rank dim generations troop

Down to the grave. The very rose we weave
Into a garland for the brow we love,
Has blood within it; to the petals cleave

The scent and hues of human clay. Above
Yon mountain tops, what once were tears distil
In fleecy rain, making the streams whereof

Men drink. Oh, cease with weak, persistent will
To storm the heights of nature. 'Tis enough
That living, suffering, we must climb the hill.

Make the plain ways of life less stern and rough:
Build not cloud-castles on the inconstant air;
Nor strive in vain to cast the viperous slough

Of fate that clings around these limbs so fair.
Kiss the rod rather; learn to face the doom
Which we with all things that have beauty share.

The world we breathe in is a chrysolite,
No chance, no dreadful drift of dateless days
May tarnish. Those long ages infinite

Which wafted us over unfooted ways,
When from dim whirling vapour sun and earth,
And all the spheres that in their cycles blaze,

Grew into being with a gradual birth,
These shall endure, though all men 'neath the sod
Turn a deaf ear alike to grief and mirth.

We know not elsewhere any other God
Than that which permeates the living whole,
Alike in sentient clay and senseless clod.

Call it Power, Motion, Life, Creator, Soul.
There is no name for force that over nerve
And granite sweeps with absolute control,

Compelling germs invisible and curve
Of comet to the one resistless law,
Wherefrom the noblest creature cannot swerve,

Nay, nor the meanest. Overmastering awe
Sublimes the sort of man that thinks and feels,
When toward the source of life he never saw,

With genuflection meek he trembling steals,
Divining in the void a Yea and Nay,
Godhood akin to Manhood, which reveals

Beyond the night of death a dawn of day.
Nor blame we man, if mid the weltering sea
That rings him round with impotent dismay,

He crowd those chasms of immensity
With phantoms of his own trail thought, and cry
To what seems loftiest in things low as he.

It may be that we shall not surely die:
It may be that the powers to whom we pray,
Are waiting in the calm crystalline sky

To breathe by death these clouds of life away.
Yet were it wasteful, think you, in the span
Of endless things, if what was once mute clay,

Should for some few years be a vocal man,
Then turn to inarticulate dust again?
Look up. 'Tis night. The ceaseless caravan

Of stars innumerous across the plain
Of heaven, we know not whence, we know not whither,
In long continuous procession strain.

Add glasses to your aching eyes, and wither
The sense of seeing with perpetual toil:
In those faint films a million globes together

Stream onward; deep by deep, the skies recoil;
And all the unpeopled gulfs with suns are rife.
Then ere your spirit falters, trim the oil

In midnight lamps; peruse the hidden strife
One drop of water, like a mimic world,
Constrains within its sphere; the throbbing strife,

The palpitating blood-beats. Life is hurled
Hither and thither reckless on the tide
Of Being: yet the basest worm encurled

Within a tortured sinew hath not died
Save by some dread immutable decree.
Life's continuity no flaws divide,

Nor lapse, nor languor. On the restless sea,
Whereof our souls are waves a little while,
There is no room for death: it cannot be.

Here cease; aspire no more; seek not to pile
Dust of delusion on your heart's despair.
Faith, Instinct, Science, Hope, can but beguile

Your ignorance with guesses light as air.
It may be, is your limit. Life may be
But Thought, your Thought, the terrible and fair,

Clasping the universe inviolably;
And you, victorious in the overthrow
Of all that clogs and cramps mortality,

May be as God. Him, knowing not, we know:
Him from the blackness of our self's abyss
We cry to, when the shadows round us grow.

This hope is yours; but ah, you know not this!

NOTES ON THEISM.

I.

It is possible for a man to be a theist in the etymological sense of that word, *i. e.* one who feels that the whole of his own and the world's interests are bound up with the idea of Theos—God—and yet not to acknowledge himself a theist in the sense given to the word by professed theists, such as the Rev. Mr. Voysey, who lifts his voice in England now.

I am not prepared to predicate so much of God as they do; nor do I think that we have arrived at that stage of knowledge in which a new definition, satisfying human needs and authoritative for human wills, can be given to the complex notion Deity. Unless the idea of God should ultimately be eliminated from the stock of human concepts, it must be remoulded to suit the changes which have taken place in our theory of the universe. The time is still far off before that can be effected; and the process, if it is to lead to serious belief, must be a very gradual and instinctive act of assimilation carried on in the minds of multitudes and masses.

Meanwhile professed theists seem to retain more of the theological systems they are undermining than is justified by logic. They ought

surely to abstain from such ways of thought as find expression in phraseology like "God's purposes," "God works out His gracious ends." To attribute personality to God is to attribute something which has significance only in relation to man's phenomenal existence. This does not prevent us from believing that mind and moral consciousness are somehow essential factors in the universe; for this reason, that we find them present and paramount in man—*i. e.* in the only portion of the universe we are really acquainted with. But we are not hereby pledged to the corollary that God must be a *Person*, a *righteous Judge*, a *loving Ruler*, a *Father*. The words I have italicised cease to be significant when we pass in imagination beyond the range of human relationship.

Theism, like Unitarianism, is a necessary phase in the process of disintegration, which must be gone through before the new process of assimilation and integration can commence. It is our duty to regard with deep interest and respect all attempts to base religion upon sounder foundations, all schemes for facilitating the transition from mythological Christianity without loss of religious fervour, all efforts to accommodate the sanctities of religious reverence with the earnestness of scientific seeking after truth, all heart-felt endeavours to worship God, "not on this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem," but literally "in spirit and in truth."

II.

What sensible man can doubt that we must, for the present, at all events, acquiesce in suspension of judgment with regard to the nature of the Supreme Being?

Let us remember that all attempts to present God to the imaginative reason have been, are, and will ever be nothing better than symbols of an unknown, unknowable power. This will render the exercise of patience, now demanded from us as the proof of faith, more easy. What we are called upon to do, is to get on as well as we can through life and in death, not indeed without faith, but without the definite symbolic forms which made faith comfortable to our forefathers.

The revolution in all our conceptions of the world which has been performed during the last three centuries is so tremendous, that no dogmatic theology of any sort can gain a hold upon our minds. At this stage, it is surely enough if, having displaced the old conception of an extra-mundane Creator, who governed a universe which had man for its centre, we have not thereby abandoned the belief in God. *Quis Deus incertum; est Deus.* Let us, in reverence and humility, retain our religious attitude. Let us, so far as we are able, refer our aspirations to God, as the only Life, the only Love, the only Law, the ground of all Reality, the source of all Being. So long as we do this, we keep alive the sacred flame in Vesta's temple of the human heart, and march in the procession of saints, martyrs, and confessors. What must of necessity remain at present blank and

abstract in our idea of God may possibly again be filled up and rendered concrete when the human mind is prepared for a new synthesis of faith and science. That, in its turn, will have to be decomposed like elder, simpler syntheses; and so forth perpetually, until the inevitable day of *Götter-Dämmerung*, the day of dying for our planet, comes. Meanwhile for man, through all these transformations of the religious idea, abides one motto fixed: τοὺς ζῶντας εὖ δρᾶν, "while living do thy duty."[1]

III.

What constitutes a theist in this age is that a man should be prepared to render up himself in faith and submission to God—that is, to the order of the world, however little he may hope to understand it, and whatever his lot in it may have to be. Different ages, involving different states of knowledge and different experiences of human life, are forced to regard the one all-being, all-sustaining inscrutable God in divers ways. David did not invent his God, nor Sophocles his, nor St. Paul his, nor Cleanthes his, nor Marcus Aurelius his, nor Mahomet his. No; God was found by these men, revealed to these men, thus and thus and thus. Yet some discoveries, some revelations of God, are more consistent with the contemporary possibilities of Theism than others. It is easier for us to cry with David: "O put thy trust in God; for I will yet give Him thanks, who is the help of my countenance and my God!" It is easier for us to say with Sophocles: "Oh, that my lot may lead me in the path of holy innocence of word and deed, the path which august laws ordain, laws that in the highest empyrean had their birth, of which Heaven is the father alone, neither did the race of mortal men beget them, nor shall oblivion ever put them to sleep. The power of God is mighty in them, and groweth not old."[2] It is easier for us to pray with Cleanthes: "Lead thou me, God, and thou Law, the daughter of God, whithersoever I am by you appointed to go; for I will follow unreluctant; or should I refuse through sin or cowardice upgrown in me, none the less shall I follow." It is easier to exclaim with Marcus Aurelius: "Everything harmonises with me which is harmony to thee, O Universe! Nothing for me is too early nor too late which is in due time for thee. Everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring, O Nature! from thee are all things, in thee are all things, to thee all things return. The poet says, 'Dear city of Cecrops;' and wilt not thou say, 'Dear city of God'?"[3] It is easier, I repeat, to think and feel with these men than to cast our all of faith upon the die thrown by St. Paul: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain." It is not true that we are "of all men most miserable," even though Christ be not risen, even though we

[1] These words were written before the publication of Darwin's Life, vol. i. p. 307. See p. 425, above.

[2] Translated by Mr. Matthew Arnold.

[3] Translated by Dr. George Long.

shall not rise. Utterances like this of St. Paul, however serviceable they may have been in a past age, lead mankind awry now from the more virile religion, the purer, the deeper, the more indestructible, which bids men trust in God even though he slay them, body and soul.

IV.

"Vain, shallow, and unthinking optimist! Inconclusive agnostic! You reject St. Paul's theism. Well, but how will the theism of your chosen prophets sound the bottomless abysses shown to us by modern science? They knew nothing of those immeasurable gulfs and distances, that time, that space, those unhomely haunts of human thought with nothing human in them—of all such things they knew nothing at all, your David, Sophocles, Cleanthes, Marcus Aurelius. You, who have the insight granted by three centuries of exploration, how is your theism going to deal with the incalculable æons of the cosmic origins—inanimate chaos, slowly stirring into fiery strife of gaseous vortices and clashing atoms—the tardy concentration of sidereal systems, in furious combustion first, then cooling to white-furnace glow, then building solid planets with their crust of rock and spilth of water, half-dead themselves, but heated by fire belched from the living sun; the long, stern struggle for existence among things which breathe upon our tiny globe; the procession of species evolved by laws of which they were unconscious, doomed successively to supersede and to exterminate the weaker? How will your theism square with this? Next, how will any theism, yours or your prophets', or St. Paul's, or Mahomet's, or Buddha's, adapt itself to the facts of human experience—to the omnipresence of evil and disease, to the dreadful lives lived by the majority of men since men appeared upon this planet, to the anguished misery of captives and convicts, to the clash between natural appetite and social law, to the morbid torments of moral madness and slow-fretting physical cancers, to the unutterable lusts and cruelties and loathsomeness of your own heart, to the dumb, blind, ignorant agonies of dread and longing and self-accusation and hopeless helplessness with which you labour in the dark night-watches, before which you quail in the presence of cold, implacable nature-forces? How will your theism adapt itself to this? Is it not ridiculous for you to prate of God? Nay, the superior personalities, whom you imagine to exist, scale over scale, ascending immeasurably far above you in the hierarchy of life, are they not also under the same doom as you, creatures of the same relentless law, enveloped in the same impermeable gloom of ignorance and futile yearning?"

I have often listened to this voice, and said not a word. There is no answer. But the soul is illogical, indomitable, unconquerable, haughtily affronting fate, knowing itself to be the last and best thing knowable by men, in spite of all these desolating, dread-inspiring, freezing, heart-breaking billows of the infinite which surge around its

rock in darkness. Poor, illogical, indomitable soul of man! She cries to God in the world-storm, yields to God, drowns in God, finds no other God than this.

Καλεῖ δ' ἀκούοντας οὐδὲν
Ἐν μέσᾳ δυσπαλεῖ τε δίνᾳ.

"Nay, but the soul cries to those who listen not, caught in the clutches of whirlpools with which it were too vain to wrestle. Who hath heard God speak? To whom hath God responded?" Perchance that is the fact. Perchance none listens. Perchance the whirlpools will close over us and suck us down. If there is a God, we shall not cry in vain. If there is none, the struggle of life shall not last through all eternity. Self, agonised and tortured as it is, must now repose on this alternative.

THE CRITERION OF ART.

In works of art, only what is in a true sense human will be found finally good and permanent. It must be agreeable to the normal perceptions of human beings who are capable of understanding and appreciating art. The test of excellence must be a common sense or agreement of opinion between normal men and women gifted with αἴσθησις or sensuous perception.

It may, parenthetically, be remarked that all perception is sensuous. We cannot perceive the truth that two and two make four without acquiring experience of duality through one or other of the senses. We cannot grasp the meaning of language without the help of hearing, of eyesight, of sense of touch. By far the larger number of our expressions for mental or æsthetic qualities, as *taste*, *goût*, *gusto*, *Geschmack*, *flair*, *fiuto*, *tact*, *sensibility*, *comprehension*, are transferred from the region of the senses and used metaphorically.

The common perception of normal men and women, who are not insensible to beauty, not impervious to ideas, will ultimately decide the question whether any work of art is first rate, second rate, or worthless.

This common perception is not the sense of the majority at any moment. Contemporaries are notoriously inadequate to judge with accuracy. It was only a small minority who appreciated Shelley and Keats in their lifetime.

It is not even the sense of the whole world at any given epoch. For instance, we are now sure that Gothic architecture possesses eminent qualities; and in the fourteenth century no other style was considered beautiful. But Palladio and Wren, with the consent of all cultivated persons in Europe, judged it barbarous. What is there

in common between L. B. Alberti and Pugin on the subject of pointed architecture?

Each individual has but a limited perceptive faculty, and this is still further limited by the prevalent state of the age in which he lives.

It follows that a final verdict regarding works of art can only be arrived at very slowly, and after considerable variations of opinion among those even who are the best qualified to judge. The consensus regarding Homer, Pheidias, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, now amounts to certainty. The agreement about a poet like D. G. Rossetti has not reached that point. A man who utters authoritative opinions for or against Rossetti carries the weight only of his own perception, backed up in either case by the perceptions of a limited number of men who feel like him. In the long-run, Rossetti will be definitely placed by the accumulation of such perceptions.

The greatest art communicates the greatest amount of satisfaction to the greatest number of normal human beings through the greatest length of time. Inferior art, the art of a Marino in poetry or of a Bernini in sculpture, may enjoy temporary applause. But even during the *furore* it creates, men of pure and trained perception will recognise its inferiority to the art of Ariosto and Michel Angelo. Art of first-rate quality may never win more than limited applause, because it appeals to highly specialised perceptions; but it is sure, in the lapse of ages, to win "fit audience, though few." Popularity implies the adaptation of the work to aggregate perceptions. Really corrupt art is only adapted to corrupt perceptions, and in a corrupt age it may be popular. It cannot maintain this popularity, for the final court of appeal is the Areopagus of sound and normal human beings. These will unanimously reject Marino and accept Shakespeare. They may differ about Rossetti; yet it is much to have obtained a minority of votes from the Areopagus.

I will conclude with a simile. The final verdict about works of art and men of genius may be compared to one of those composite photographs (devised by Mr. Francis Galton[1]) which are obtained by the superposition, one above the other, of many negatives taken from different individuals. Each separate face has left its filmy impress on the composite photograph; and all the faces have contributed to form a type—the type of a criminal, the type of a consumptive person, the type of a certain family. Blurred in some of its outlines and details as the ultimate result may be, such a composite photograph has an unmistakable generic individuality, which is even more instructive, even more convincing for the student of criminal, consumptive subject, specific family, than the mere aggregate of single photographs which compose it. It yields, not the person, but the type. Even so the final verdict of criticism is the total result of countless personal judgments, superimposed, the one

[1] "Inquiries into Human Faculty," p. 340.

above the other, coalescing in their points of agreement, shading off into blurred outlines at points of disagreement, but combining to produce a type which is an image of fundamental truth.

NOTE ON "REALISM AND IDEALISM."

I.

The inevitable infusion of a subjective element into every attempt made by men to reproduce nature, on which I have insisted with reference to figurative art, may be still further illustrated. It appears in all reports made by credible witnesses of events which have been noticed by them. A precisely identical account cannot be expected by ten witnesses of the same occurrence, though each has been anxious to relate the literal truth. Furthermore, it is impossible to obtain exactly similar reports of such reports from every ten veracious persons who have heard one or more of them from the lips of original witnesses. Thus the element of subjectivity in the primary reports is multiplied in the secondary accounts transmitted of the fact. When there exists a strong subjective prepossession on the part of the witness, then the event becomes spontaneously idealised in a definite direction. The concurrence of several such subjective prepossessions, colouring the report of an event which is extremely interesting to all the witnesses concerned, results in an ideal which comes to be accepted for the literal fact.

This is perhaps the proper explanation of miraculous occurrences attested by fairly good evidence. The genesis of those potent ideals which give force to religions may, in like manner, be referred to subjective faculties exercised by many witnesses in sympathy. We find it difficult, for example, to interpret the Gospels without postulating the existence of an historical Christ. But given that basis of reality, the large element of idealism in the Gospels can be comprehended by this hypothesis of subjective intervention without ascribing *mala fides* to the witnesses. In the redaction of several parallel reports to one coherent narrative, the subjective element was not eliminated, but intensified and harmonised upon certain lines. The ideal which formed a factor in each separate report obtained substantiality. In this way four main ideal portraits of Christ were produced, which have been subsequently elaborated into one highly idealised conception by the slow continuous process of centuries.

II.

Another instance might be chosen from a different region. History has been contemptuously called the chronicle of lies and illusions. In so far as this is true, it results from the impossibility of seeing facts except through our own senses and the reports of other persons.

The data of history arrive to us coloured by subjectivity; and the historian, eager as he may be to eliminate the truth, judges the material he has to deal with through the medium of his personal impressibility. Thus a contemporary history, like Kinglake's "Crimean War," cannot be written without bias. The greater the art-work, the more energetic the attempt to realise, the keener the effort to extract fact from inferences and statistics, the more imaginative and idealistic will the product be. In this way we are led to the conclusion that the past can never be known to us except in its broadest, simplest outlines. The crossing, blending, interminglement, and quasi-chemical combination of divers subjectivities which any chapter of history implies, render the attempt to reach pure truth impossible. Yet we must not, therefore, on this account, despair of history. Persistent endeavour in the direction of reality, in the sublimation and elimination of subjective elements, brings us to a residuum which has at least its own generic authenticity.

III.

In other departments of literature, notably in romance and fiction, the same principles hold good. We have heard much lately of realistic novels. But even Zola, with his notebook and his catalogues of objects, is compelled to idealise, because he cannot seize reality except as a mode of his own sensuous and mental being. There are as many ways of perceiving and conceiving fact as there are individuals. A novel cannot be the exact representation of reality, because it must be the representation of what some human being finds in reality. This has been tersely and vigorously put by M. Guy de Maupassant in the preface to his "Pierre et Jean."[1] "How childish, moreover," he exclaims, "to believe in reality, since we each carry our own in our thought and in our organs! Our eyes, our ears, our sense of smell, of taste, differing from one person to another, create as many truths as there are men upon earth. And our minds, taking instruction from these organs, so diversely impressed, understand, analyse, judge, as if each of us belonged to a different race. Each one of us, therefore, forms for himself an illusion of the world; and the writer has no other mission than to reproduce faithfully this illusion, with all the contrivances of art that he has learned and has at his command."

In the main, this doctrine carries conviction. Yet M. de Maupassant must be taken to task for one or two exaggerated statements. It is not childish to believe in reality because the individual cannot perceive it or reproduce it without the admixture of his subjectivity. It is not true that there are as many truths as there are men upon the earth; else the delusions of maniacs, who mistake a wreath of yellow paper for a crown of gold, or a dirty cotton gown for the

[1] I quote from Mr. Henry James's translation, *Fortnightly Review*, March, 1888, p. 366.

bridal robe of a daughter of Zion, would be truths; else colour-blindness would rank on equal terms with complete vision. Nor conversely is it true that the conceptions which we each of us form of the world are merely illusions. The fact is, that we do believe in reality, although we admit our inability to seize it or express it except in terms of our own thought and senses. The fact is, that we are capable of distinguishing normal from abnormal impressions of reality, and that only the former have any lasting value for us. The fact is, that while we recognise a certain element of inadequacy, a certain admixture of illusion, in all subjective perceptions and in all subjective renderings of reality, we are well aware that some are nearer to the truth than others. Dante's and Shakespeare's, Raphael's and Pheidias's impressions of reality, though tinctured with subjective colours, appeal to our sense of truth more forcibly than Marino's and Cyril Tourneur's, than Fuseli's and Bernini's. If it were not so, criticism would be impossible, and humanity would have to renounce its claim to common sense. The pursuit of knowledge, even of such relative knowledge as mankind can hope for, would have to be abandoned as absurd. We should not be able to communicate with one another in the expectation of being understood. We should be precluded from legislating for the common benefit of society. The human race would be reduced to an aggregation of isolated world-making monads.

Truth lies in the avoidance of paradoxical extremes. Full recognition of the play of subjectivity in individuals must not blind us to the fact that, over and above and independent of this subjectivity, we are conscious of a standard relation to reality, by reference to which we are enabled to form judgments. The race is larger than the individuals which compose it; and constant appeal must be made to the common from the personal perception.

This being the case, criticism finds, when it surveys the several products of any marked historical epoch, that they present more notes of similiarity than of difference. The notes of difference belong to individual artists; the notes of similarity belong to the period which produced them, and the tribe from which they sprang. Having ascertained the specific note belonging to a particular epoch, criticism compares this with the note of other equally differentiated epochs. At this point the generic note emerges, that which constitutes humanity at large. From such studies, whereby a standard has been gained, criticism returns to the consideration of species and particulars. The specific falls into its place of relation to the generic, and the individual is inspected as subordinated to the species which he helps to integrate.

Subjectivity holds sway throughout the process. The particular sees reality through the spectacles of self. The species sees it through spectacles of race and period. Mankind sees it through spectacles of generic human properties. Neither particular, nor species, nor yet genus eliminates the subjective element or reproduces

reality. Transmutation into human stuff or idealisation is the condition under which man works.

NOTE ON "THE MODEL."

THE female form has less variety than the male. It cannot symbolise so many modes of vigorous existence. There are several positions which it cannot assume with grace—as in the act of running, the spreading abroad of the limbs, and wherever the belly and pelvis are extended by physical effort. Raphael, in his drawing of Roxana visited by Alexander, and in his fresco of Venus rising in her car, upon the Farnesina ceiling, adopted graceless female attitudes. No Greek artist, so far as I remember, fell into this fault of showing how the female figure sprawls. The Greeks took pains to drape or partially drape women in their statues; or when they modelled the nude, they selected attitudes of self-restrained repose or of marked sexual suggestiveness—attitude of self-restraint in the Venus de' Medici, attitude of sexual suggestiveness in the Venus Accroupie.

If we divest ourselves of sexual associations, we shall recognise that the male is more ready-made in plastic quality to the artist's hand, more capable of varied posturing, more representative of human energies and activities. It requires less management in order to bring out its qualities and tone down its defects.

On the other side, the female presents finer suavities of contour, higher elements of voluptuousness. There are numerous modes of emotion—all the tender, imploring, shrinking, languishing, seductive, yielding, timid, wavering modes—which the female expresses, and which are inappropriate to the male.

The activity of the male, the passivity of the female, are seen in their respective physical types. The male is classical, the female romantic. The male is sculpturesque, the female musical.

Thus it is chiefly when the body is used as an index of human activity, vigorous capacity, ebullient passion, solid strength, that the male predominates in art. Organically, as an instrument of action, it is far more potent and more varied in resources.

But when we use the body as the index of human susceptibilities, sensibilities, allurements, in this less active and less intellectual region the female asserts predominance.

Michel Angelo treated the female nude (especially in his Night and Dawn at San Lorenzo) in the male key; and obtained some noticeable tragic effects therefrom.

Praxiteles treated the male nude (especially in his Apollo Sauroktonos and the Neapolitan torso of Bacchus) in the female key, and obtained some noticeable sensuous effects therefrom.

Artists of a (i.) distinctly intellectual order, like Michel Angelo

and Signorelli, use the male nude for decorative purposes—roof of Sistine Chapel, arabesques at Orvieto. Artists of a (ii.) sensual type, like Correggio, use either the hermaphroditic male for decorative purposes (Parma cupolas) or the female; as indeed do all decorators of theatres, baths, places of enjoyment built for men. The first class of artists appeal to a sublime and abstract sense of form; the second, to natural instincts.

Draughtsmen like Bartolozzi have treated the male and female nude together in a mixed key, sacrificing the essential qualities of each, not to an animal desire, but to a flaccid sentiment, which marks the decadence of art. This is not the case with antique hermaphroditic statues. These consciously confuse the male and female keys, employing a Mixo-Lydian mood, for purposes of undisguised voluptuousness.

The colourist gets silvery tones from the female, tawny tones from the male; smooth surfaces and soft chiaroscuro from the female, abrupt lights and shades with angular modelling of surface from the male.

He does best who utilises these sexual differences by properly accentuating the contrasts of male and female. But a Guido may give us a middle region for the male, which is the region of adolescence. See his Samson at Bologna. Praxiteles again may do the like. See his Hermes at Olympia, where adolescence, not hermaphroditism, is suggested. To go beyond this in attributing female qualities of tone and surface to the male is hazardous, though it is sometimes very effective, as, for instance, in Bazzi's St. Sebastian.

PRIORITY OF THOUGHT TO LANGUAGE.

It is a pernicious delusion to suppose that language creates thought more than thought creates language. The contrary is true. This may be exemplified from the Platonic philosophy. Plato saw that in language there were both *good* and *goodness*, particular and abstract quality of good. He rightly inferred an idea corresponding to the abstract, and recognised *goodness* as a thought expressed by language. Upon this perception he founded his theory of ideas. What is weak in that theory is the extension of abstract thought expressed in language to thoughts which have no abstract equivalents in language. He saw there was an idea of *goodness* as apart from *good;* so he said there was an idea of *horseness* as apart from *horse.* Here, instead of language creating thought, thought seeks to create a language not in use among men. That is an extreme instance. But it might amply be shown that thought, in all its complex stages, forces language in order to obtain expression. The phraseology of metaphysics, from Aristotle downwards, abounds in examples of the concrete being

warped to serve the abstract. After asserting this, I do not deny the reflex action of language upon thought, the fettering of thought by language which has once been fixed, and very often badly fixed, to adumbrate some stage of painfully emergent thought. Metaphorical expressions of all sorts, indicating the shifts of thought to find utterance, are instances. But these confirm the view that thought is prior to language.

COLOUR-SENSE AND LANGUAGE.

The sense of colour cannot be judged by colour-nomenclature.

People, in a primitive state of society, may be acutely sensitive to colours, as indeed they have all their senses in fine working order, and yet may have no names to denote the shades of hue.

This is due mainly to the fact that colours are not connected with utility. The brain is lazy, and only coins words which are necessary. It can dispense with a wide vocabulary for pigments, since these involve no grave concerns of life or business.

Suppose the currency were established, not on varying weights of precious metals, but on varying tints of red, blue, yellow; then we should soon find a nomenclature springing up to denote the finest gradations of those colours.

That is not the case. In the early stages of civilisation, colour involves neither affairs of life and death, nor affairs of property. Language, therefore, leaves it alone, at least such language as enters into literature.

Xenophanes describes the rainbow by the simplest generic words:

πορφύρεον καὶ φοινίκεον καὶ
χλωρὸν ἰδέσθαι.

But while this scientific man was so describing it, practical workmen were weaving all the colours of the rainbow into Athene's peplus. Those workmen must have known how to ask for dyes at the colourman's. Perhaps they used phrases like *venetian red*, *chrome yellow*, *verditer*, *épinards vomis*, *cadmium*, *burnt sienna*, *vandyke brown*, *merda d'oca*, *umber*, *peacock blue;* phrases, that is to say, which even now scarcely show their heads in literature.

Persian poetry affords a parallel instance. It deals with colour broadly, by generalities, by salient tones arresting simple attention. Yet Persian carpets exhibit the finest blending of the most subtly matched and graduated tints. And the older these carpets are, the more are they prized for their exquisite solution of problems in the art of colour.

With the advance of civilisation to the point which we have reached, the nomenclature of colours becomes more rich, but always,

as it were, by haphazard. We talk of *pink*, *lilac*, *mauve*, *magenta*, *lemon*, *fawn*, *dove*, *peacock*, *gris de perle*, always using metaphors from natural objects, or the mere lingo of commerce. And even these words to express tints of colour are employed with diffidence in literature, although literature has grown reckless in its exercise of means for appealing through language to the intellect, and summoning up pictures for the mental eye.

We are at a different point with regard to colour from that which primitive peoples occupied. The art of painting, critically examined and reflected on, has forced us to distinguish hues. Widely extended commerce in articles of dress and furniture has made its language current. Literature has passed into a descriptive and pictorial stage. Science has drawn attention to the value which colours possess for the discrimination of substances and the analysis of tissues. Lastly, we have discovered that our lives and deaths depend on colour-blindness, through the employment of coloured lights as railway signals.

It would be little short of miraculous if, under these influences, the susceptibility to tints of colours, and the corresponding nomenclature to denote them, were not largely augmented.

Our experience, however, must not make us draw a wrong conclusion from the poverty of language to express colour in earlier ages of civilisation. As it is, we have no proper nomenclature—only such as we pick up from commerce and the colour-men. The shifts we submit to in order to communicate sensations of colour ought rather to teach us that in the Homeric or other early ages colours were fully appreciated by the senses, but had not found their analogues in language.

THE END.

Richard Clay & Sons, Limited, London & Bungay.

GLORIA G[illegible] LIBRARY
M[illegible]
TARRYTOWN[illegible] YORK 10591

824.8
S988

96578

AUTHOR
Symonds, John

TITLE
Essays, speculative and suggesti

Symonds, John
Essays, speculative and suggestive

Gloria Gaines Memorial Library
Marymount College
Tarrytown, New York 10591

1. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, periodicals and pamphlets are to be used only in the library.
2. Reserved books may be borrowed over night only.
3. All other books may be retained for two weeks.
4. Two cents a day is charged for each book kept overtime.
5. Injury to books beyond reasonable wear and all losses shall be paid for.
6. No books may be taken from the library without being charged.

Marymount College Library
PR5522 .E7 1894
Symonds, John Addington,
Essays, speculative and sugges
030101
0 2015 9047242 3